Metalsmith

Winter 1990
Volume 10 Number 1
$7

Dirk Van Erp, *Table Lamp*,
copper with mica shade,
25"h x 23"d, c. 1910.
This lamp was on exhibit
at the Hirschl & Adler Galleries
in New York City
from October 7 to November 18
in "From Architecture to Object:
Masterworks of the American
Arts & Crafts Movement."
The exhibition, which travels to
the Struve Gallery, Chicago, IL
from December 15, 1989
to January 22, 1990,
is accompanied by a 156-page
illustrated catalog, available
for $25, post-paid, from
Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc.,
21 East 70th St., New York,
NY 10021.
The story on Dirk Van Erp
begins on page 42.

HELEN DRUTT

Gijs Bakker
A Retrospective

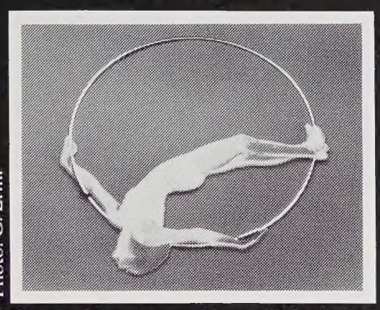

Photo: G. Erml

"George Hoyningen-Huene" Neckpiece

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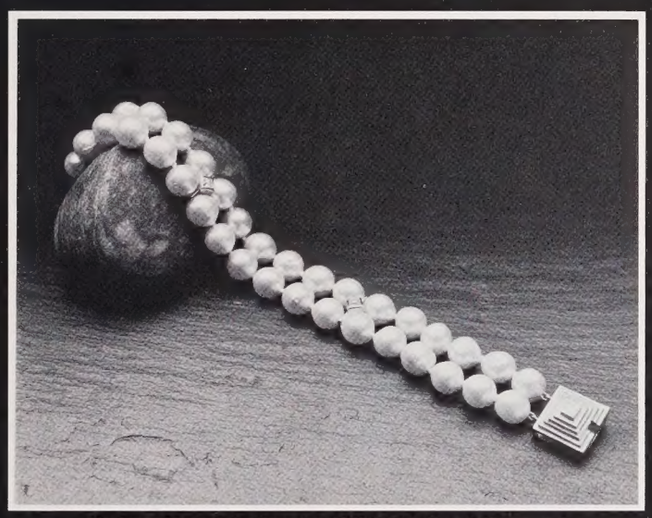

Barbara Heinrich, *Bracelet*, 18K Gold, Pearl, Diamond

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Metalsmith

Winter 1990
Volume 10 Number 1

Bruce Metcalf, *Cactus Head in a Frame of Missles*
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Editorial

The concept of pocket jewelery came to my attention recently on a visit to Hiroko and Gene Pijanowski's program at the University of Michigan. An Austrian student there was making pieces that are not worn around the neck or pinned onto the lapel but that fit into a pocket to be removed and exhibited at apporpriate moments during the day — say, while having coffee with a friend or while reading in the library.

The idea triggered a continuing dilemma in the world of jewelry and that is the notion of wearability. It reminded me also of a recent article in *The New York Times* that was remarking on the increasing acceptability of women reapplying their makeup at the table, particularly while dining in a restaurant. The lipstick obviously comes off during the meal and it has become the trend to reapply it at table, not to retire to the "powder room." Why don't we consider jewelry the same way, I wonder? Somehow we feel that a piece of jewelry should be able to be worn throughout the entire evening, even as the circumstances of clothing — the wearing of a coat or the shedding of a jacket— and activity — eating, dancing, riding in a car with a seatbelt —change. Should jewelry be required to endure all these conditions? And, if so, doesn't that limit the size, placement and most importantly the perception of etiquette in a piece of jewelry?

I can't think of very many pieces of jewelry that are not wearable, in the literally functional sense. Yes, a ring may be the wrong size or a brooch may be too heavy for a lightweight shirt to support, but these are easily remedied practical matters. In fact, the jewelry is wearable under the proper conditions. The more pressing question is whether the jewelry is comfortable to wear, not so much physically comfortable but psychologically comfortable. There are many people who wear physically uncomfortable clothes — business suits and ties, tight skirts and stockings — but psychologically these constitute acceptable attire for us in Western culture today and so we are comfortable with them.

In a larger context, there have been radical departures from the norm that raise the question of societal propriety in wearing. One that comes immediately to mind are the punks in England, who opposed the acceptable standards of dress, by gaudy hair dying, by wearing black leather and heavy boots, and by considering "dangerous" objects such as razor blades and open safety pins as jewelry. Certainly, their priorities were not ones of beauty, convenience or elegance. Such radical departures often only engender mistrust and rejection due to the stridency of their position. But they are effective thorugh sheer provocation.

The articles in this issue present a range of jewelry, from the simple silverwork of Taxco to the painterly collages of Earl Pardon to the rhetorical figures of Bruce Metcalf. All three are clearly jewelry due to their configuration as pins, neckpieces or bracelets, but they have differing connotations in terms of wearability. I wonder if anyone would think that any of this work is unwearable.

— SB

Metalsmith

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THE PRECIOUS OBJECT
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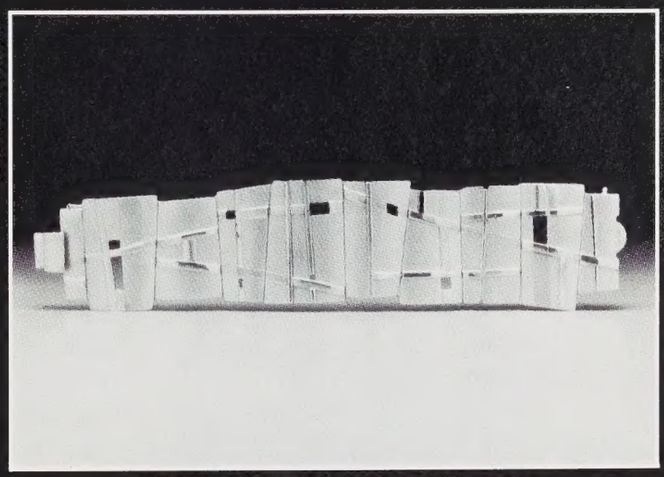

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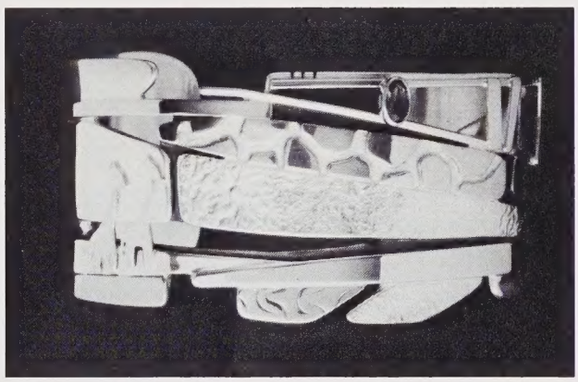

Kyle H. Leister, Giraffe Cuff 1"×5½"

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Letters

Dear Editor:

Thanks for Keith Lewis's column on "Ethics of Materials" in the summer issue of *Metalsmith*. It echoes my feelings exactly, as I've cut out ebony, 14k, etc. from my work, and it makes me feel less alone in the apolitical, individualistic crafts world.

Nancy Guinn
Albuquerque, NM

Dear Editor:

The column by Keith Lewis was very much appreciated by those of us interested in endangered species. We, at the Endangered Species Society, are in the process of opening a retail store with the emphasis on Endangered Species. Our goal is to educate people on the plight of our vanishing wildlife and the horrendous speed these extinctions are occurring. Profits will be used to purchase critically needed habitat.

Dennis & Ann Williams
Denver, CO

Dear Editor:

I am writing to you on behalf of the African elephant, a fellow earth inhabitant that needs our help. These incredible creatures are being killed at an unprecedented rate simply for their ivory tusks. As we have come to discover, elephants are intelligent animals, which stay in close–knit family groups, making them more vulnerable to poachers who kill and butcher entire families at once. World demand has pushed the price of ivory from $2.50 to $100 per pound! As long as the demand remains, the slaughter will continue. The World Wildlife Fund, of which I am a member, is campaigning to save the African elephant. Their work includes strengthening international governments to step up antipoaching efforts. WWF is asking people around the world to not buy any kind of ivory products at home or abroad. As an artist and a jeweler I'm asking my fellow artists not to use ivory in their work. Most artists know that what greatness they have lies in being able to make meaningful statements about what is going on around them. We hold up a mirror for society to see things they might not otherwise see. When we use alternative materials in place of ivory and explain to our patrons why we don't use ivory, we pass the message on: Don't Buy Ivory! As artists and as humans, it is our place to take care of all life on this planet as well as beautify it. We're all in this together — whatever we do for others, we do for ourselves.

Debbi Sprinkle
Kansas City, MO

We were pleased to read in The New York Times *on October 17 that the African elephant has just been classified as an endangered species by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in an effort to halt poachers by ivory hunters, who have drastically reduced its numbers. Ed.*

Dear Editor:

Tim McCreight, writing in the Summer issue of Metalsmith, seems perturbed by something he calls "poor writing." The overintellectualized piece of gibberish he offers as evidence is well-chosen to illustrate the point. The romance and power of language, however, is seductive and intoxicating. Tim soon ventures into the swamps of embroidery. Memorize the tool catalogs — crucible! mallet! Speak but the words, and the cup will form itself! Magic — Shazam! Technic, not technique; esthetic, not aesthetic. Is he casting a spell on us?

Indeed, one of the most ancient forms of magic rests on the idea that the spoken word, as extension of human will, transmutes reality. Today, the wizards of Madison Avenue make million-dollar magic from the creative use (?) of language. The contemporary wizard appreciates the appeal to authority, and indeed, we are treated to the wisdom of Joseph Campbell... "language plays a vital role in establishing the reality of our experiences. Until we have the word, we don't really own the experience." True. But, what's the point of ownership if not sales and merchantability? Clear title is no guarantee of sale, however. And I do not buy the idea that one can "gain a meaningful possession of our field by studying tool catalogs!"

Zen teaches that thought is poison to experience. When the hand of the master makes the anvil ring, the magic that happens is, and must remain, pre–literate, free of the distractions of language. It is as the child playing in mud that we confront our work, not the clutter of some elitist terminology, no matter how comforting it may be to those who use it to dazzle the novice! At the point of contact, only experience will serve. No word magic can make the aim true. And that is the meaning of precision. Not that aim was taken, but that the mark was hit. Tim has the receiving end well in perspective.

Letters continued on page 50

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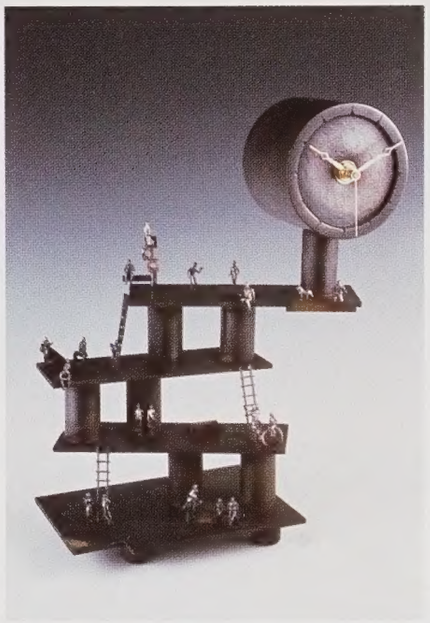

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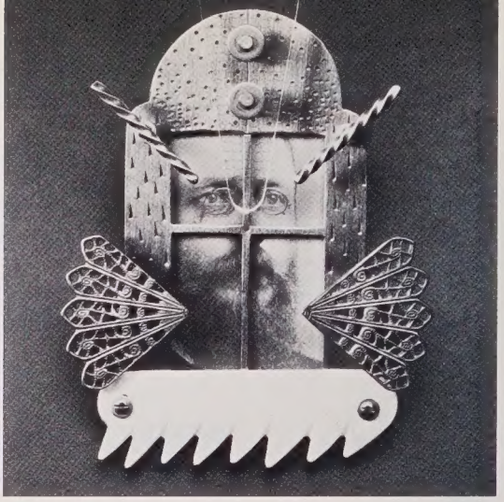


Thomas Mann, *Herr Freud* Collage Pin,
silver, bronze, brass, lucite and micarta, 2 x 3", 1985
Photo: Will Crocker
Courtesy: Signature Gallery, Boston, MA

by A. Stiletto

This column is about fashion. I have been writing it for a couple of years now, still with some trepidation. Every time I pick up a new issue of the magazine, I hope to find more on the subject, some repudiation that I alone am enamored with fashion's implications for art and life.

One thing that is hard to overlook when you are writing about fashion, about change for change's sake in the world of metalsmithing, is that you sense the watchful eyes of academia upon you. There is a righteousness that echos of sanctimonious estimations about timelessness and beauty in the production of jewelry and holloware or, for that matter, metal sculpture. I hear it in idle talk throughout the community and I hear it confirmed in the formal dialogue in this magazine.

Now, I don't intend to thrash other writers and columnists who write here; that would be an act of impropriety and coarsely unfashionable. Nor do I wish to lament the insularity of their "academic" positions, since more than occasionally I have been accused of taking fashion as more than what it is commonly held to be — a chance, unpredictable shift in public taste. But what I want to do is simply voice a deeply felt concern for what I sense is a narrow, even closed dialogue.

In embarking on a fashion column, I had presumed that the metalsmithing community commonly acknowledged that metalsmithing was an all-embracing endeavor of intrinsic value, and thus a worthy subject to be looked at from many different perspectives: social, political, psychological, cultural, esthetic, economic, philosophical, practical and fashionable. I had also thought that this situation was primarily the result of pioneering educators who brought metalsmithing into academia to be fortified by history, theory and research.

Circumstantial evidence, however, points to the fact that life inside academia is not the stronghold of essential truths we expect it to be. *The New York Times* recently wrote that a report on higher education indicated that many college teachers are poorly trained to teach and those who do become good teachers are not rewarded. The article caught my attention with the shocking headline: "Too seldom is collegiate teaching viewed for what it is: the business of the business."

Anyone who has passed through secondary education and higher learning knows that teaching is valued differently in each system. In "lower" learning, teachers are hired by assessing their prowess at pedagogy, with little worry about their proclivity for any specific subject matter. In higher learning, teachers are hired on the basis of a special knowledge of subject matter (scholarship), or a special skill (technician), or even on their achievements in the private sector. Pedagogy occurs in college teaching through classroom trial and error.

Despite the above charge about business, academia still fiercely maintains its legitimacy. Professors stand as "tellers of truth," seeing their role as a private affair, conducted in the closed environment of the studio/classroom and protected by academic freedom. In a democratic vision, there could be no more appropriate symbol than the independent pursuit of virtue as a human being's inalienable right. Maybe that is why I am so conscious of "them" looking over my shoulder.

So, what is so alarming about the erosion of teaching skills, and why does it cause my fear of the academic gaze? Well, the erosion of teaching skills has a practical consequence for education, one that *The Times* said "demands artful and imaginative presentation as well as the ability to establish a classroom environment enabling students to construct knowledge plausibly and sensibly." But also, every time a teacher stands before his or her students and attempts to inculcate them with specific knowledge, he or she attests to the "collective responsibility" of all teachers in that discipline. It is the ultimate sign of personal and professional affirmation when a professor wishes to "teach" others. This action of teaching actually binds the community in the long run. If it were not for the desire to teach, the crafts would be in a woeful state today. If it were not for teaching, craftsmen would not only be without skills but also without the fortitude in belief that what was taught was something bigger that the teacher's own idiosynchratic way, something that was respected by a larger community and sustained by that community.

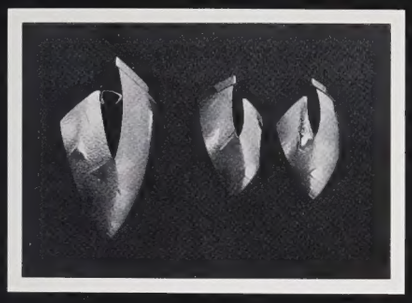
I am not talking merely about tradition in the strict sense, since I do believe that skills, values and teaching change; otherwise, I wouldn't be writing about fashion. But I do feel the need for collective integrity that as things change, they remain the same. It is this sense of a collective responsibility, I guess, that weighs so heavily upon me and that I also sense is the atmosphere that pervades that which I see around me. It is what I wish to both attack and respect at the same time.

I get upset when I hear that most teachers are uncomfortable in evaluating their colleagues or having their own teaching evaluated. In the spirit of absolute academic freedom, we could not expect otherwise. But, then, so do we expect the same from our marketplace. We translate freedom as a *caveat* in the loss of responsibility. We shift value from permanence to fashion. We protect the freedom of being wrong (or, more importantly, being devious) at the buyer's expense. There is no collective responsibility in fashion — by definition and in practice. Should it be any different for academia? I don't know.

Maybe that is what keeps academia on guard — that they do not know either. Maybe that is why I feel their scrutiny, because they are looking for confirmation, one way or another, looking to see if selling their knowledge *quid pro quo* countermands the credibility, or verity, of their product. Buyer beware! Freedom of choice!

One thing I do know, I desparately need academia's collective responsibility. Writing about fashion, as I am committed to doing, I need them as a foil and as a conscience. I need to attack their stalwart pedantry as I need to be fortified by their integrity. I need them to speak with a unified voice in the harmony of essential truths while I ridicule this illusion as merely a herd of individuals. I need to champion change for change's sake in a climate that champions metalsmithing for metalsmithing's sake.
E pluribus unum.

A. Stiletto works in and around New York and writes a regular column on fashion for Metalsmith.



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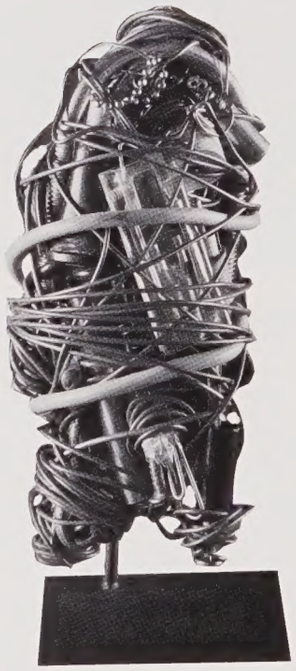
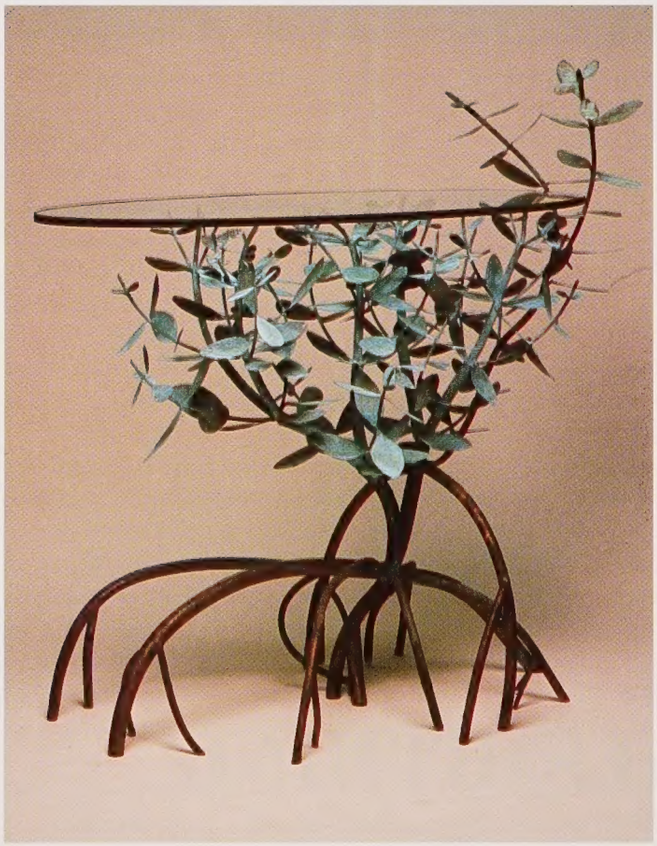
Currents

Philadelphia Wireman

The Philadelphia Wireman sculptures were found abandoned in a side street in Philadelphia on trash night. The circumstances of their discovery suggests that they were disposed of after the maker's death. Made in the early 1970s, the entire collection, most about 5" to 6" tall, numbers 600 pieces and appears to be the creation of one person, presumably male, since it is brute strength, not tools, that manipulates the wire. Rubber bands and tape are also used to bind elements. The contents of the pieces are varied, including plastic, glass, umbrella parts, batteries, pens, leather, reflectors, nuts, bolts, nails, foil, coins, toys, watches, eye glasses, tools and jewelry. The Philadelphia Wireman sculptures were exhibited last fall in the New Jersey Artists Series "A Density of Passions" at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton. The sculptures are represented by Janet Fleisher Gallery, Philadelphia, PA.



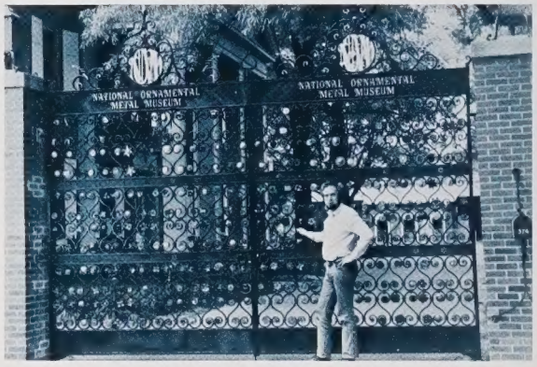


A Tree Grows in Florida

Recently, the Florida Craftsmen Gallery in St. Petersburg showcased a representative selection of Florida's metalwork as the premier exhibition of its 1989–1990 season. The table by Loyd V. Jones, featured here, walks a thin line between a surreal "arbor vitae" and an Art Nouveau affection for rooted legs. The table, nevertheless, looks like it would be appropriate for a hip cafe in Miami, but how many espresso drinkers would be disturbed by a creeping vine finding its way into one's cup or around one's legs?

Culture Trap

Primitive imagery has been a mainstay of contemporary crafts. Trying to find the link between a multicultural heritage and contemporary expression, practitioners never seem to tire of this mythical quest. A recent group show, "The Primitive Image," at the Ferrin Gallery, Northampton, MA, brought together artists in various media, illustrating the diverse strategies currently being undertaken: Mara Superior's painted porcelain vases, John Flemming's leather masks, Deborah Banyas's dolls and jewelry by Roberta and Dave Williamson, Julie Show and Laurie Lowell. Pictured here is Robert and Rose Ann Place, *Turol Box*, repoussé, cast, reticulated and fabricated 22k and 14k gold, sterling silver, ruby, emerald and deer–skin lining.



NOMM Gets Gated

A pair of custom–designed gates have been dedicated and installed at the National Ornamental Metal Museum, Memphis, TN, commemorating the Museum's tenth anniversary. Conceived by architectural metal designer Richard Quinnell of Surrey, England, and individually crafted by blacksmiths throughout the world, the gates stand as a monument to the variety of decorative metalwork done today.

The gates, 13–feet tall and 16–feet wide, are comprised of 192 scrolls. Each scroll has two motifs made by blacksmiths in 14 countries. Motifs range from a two–inch Viking ship from Sweden to jalapeno peppers, a crescent moon and a dogwood blossom.

Enamel Redux

"Spotlight 89", a recent juried exhibition of 133 works by 98 Southeast craftsmen, was sponsored jointly by the American Craft Council Southeast Regional Assembly, the University of Florida and Florida Craftsmen, Inc., the National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Florida Division of Cultural of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Arts Council. One of two awards of excellence was received by Celia Braswell for *Night Dreams*, brooch, enamel on roller–printed copper, 24k gold foil, silver cloisonné wire, set in sterling and 18k gold, 17/8 x 13/4 x 11/4". Photo: Ralph Gabriner.

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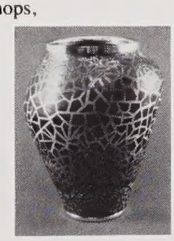

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Report from England

British Jewellery and German Jewellery

by James Evans

Contrary to what one might infer about this exhibition, mounted at the Crafts Council Gallery in London last summer, from the poster, the two catalogs and the separate installations, there is little evidence of rivalry between these two bodies of work. Not because this was considered an unlikely or illogical possibility, but for the simple reason, that, as organized, there was no competition. Through no fault of the British artists exhibited, the Crafts Council put together a mismatched dual show, performing, in my opinion, a disservice to the jewellery community here.

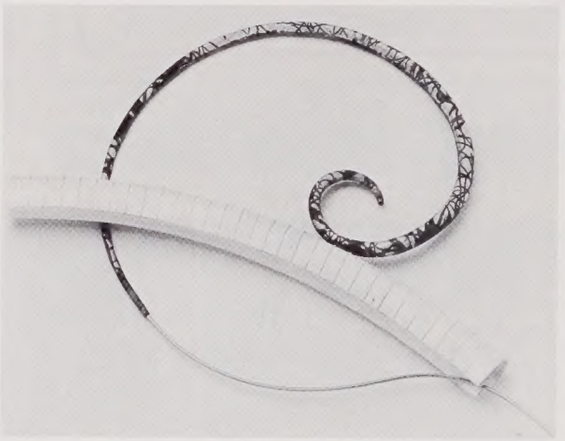
One needed only to compare the two catalogs to see what was in store. Catalogs can be polemical, discursive and insightful or pretentious and misleading. But they are always instructive for what is included, what is implied and what is avoided. Also, for what is invested.

Here was a substantial German catalog, produced at considerable expense, three times the size of the rather slight British one. This, sadly, said much about the two govenment's arts funding policies. The German catalog contained four essays, which attempt to be serious, scholarly, historical, informed and analytical — in short, essays that attempt to contextualize the work on view in an intelligent and cohesive way.

In contrast, the British catalog contained a rambling, unrewarding essay by Graham Hughes, which, to me, is reactionary and out of touch, what with its surly and pompous pleas for artists to return to "the jewel" and "the precious," and its attempt to dismiss more recent experimental work. This quotation from the essay will suffice to illustrate the point: "Jewels have always been a teaser to craft aesthetes: jewels involve too much money to fit into the ethical scheme of many crafts societies, for instance, the Arts and Crafts founded a century ago. Many devoted craftsmen have felt there is something wrong about wealth, and about the wealthy women who wear fine jewels. So, craft dissertations too often miss out the larger part of the jewel scene, simply because of its glamour, and *are left with lacklustre pieces in base metal made by the poor for the homely.*" (Italics are mine.) Then Peter Dormer and Jan Burney patch together what appears to be a collage of artists' statements, tied together with a few less-than-insightful observations about contemporary jewellery work in Brtiain. Dormer, too, has of late dismissed recent progressive craftwork. There remains Ralph Turner's foreword, which attempts to sketch out the brief of the British exhibition. It is not, he says, a survey of current work but an exploration of makers "working within the restraints of wearability and uninhibited by the intrinsic value of their materials." This sounds fine, if rather difficult to define — an exhibition responding to the vocal demands of traditional (not conservative) jewellers, working in traditional materials, who have felt underacknowledged by the Council in its commitment to promote a more "avant-garde" body of work. While it must be agreed that this is long overdue, the exhibition would also have been a great opportunity to forego some "politically correct" choices in order to present a more focused and coherent show, which might have been a corrective to criticisms of past policy and to the charges of exposure.

Specifically, if the selector (Ralph Turner, presumably) had opted for an exhibition to match the Germans equally in work shown, developments plotted and illustrating historic continuities (three generations of teachers and students in the German case), a whole spectrum of underexposed and seldom-seen artists might have been included. As to the other constraint for selection, "working within the restraints of wearability," a debatable issue at best, again a large number of jewellers could have been called upon to contribute to make a much more informed and visionary show. What we are offered is a curious selection of makers, each of whom I personally respect and consider significant, thrown together in an unfocused and ultimately uncomfortable setting.

The problem for some was simply one of overexposure — David Watkins, Wendy Ramshaw — for others, it was incongruity of inclusion — Gordon Stewart and Jane Adam working in aluminum in a show defined as "precious-metal-based" and Elisabeth Holder, currently Professor of Jewellery at Dusseldorf Akademie, whose always superb work belonged by inclination, training and nationality with the German collection. The problem, in the case of Gerda Flockinger, however revered as teacher and early innovator, is that her work seems to me to be overrated and less than engaging. Thankfully, Cynthia Cousens's work looked strong and



Cythia Cousens
Curved Sliced Brooch
silver, oxidized silver, 14cm.
Photo: Paul Seheult

came out relatively unscathed. With more clarity of vision from the selector, the artists tossed together in this show might have been pruned in order for alternative choices to be made. As considerable space was given over to Flockinger's work in the recent Crafts Classics exhibition and none to the seldom-seen Charlotte de Syllas, here would have been a prime candidate for inclusion, not to mention Eric Spiller, Kevin Coates, Catherine Mannheim, Catherine Swann, David Poston, Alison Bradley, Bryan Illsley or Breon O'Casey, for example. Then, too, not all the important makers of the great 1970's explosion have abandoned jewellery. And while I applaud the inclusion of a new generation of artists, such as Maria Wong and Gordon Stewart, what about the possibilities of work from Hazel Jones, Richard Twose, Kim Ellwood, Brian Podschies, Maura Heslop, Clara Hoad or Mike Abbott and so on?

To make matters worse, the installation for British Jewellery was dreadful. The deathly grey colours and the badly executed plexiglass rod inserts holding the work should have been serious reconsidered.

The German work, on the other hand, while varied, generally displayed an underlying shared set of values: rigour, focus, intellectual aspirations, a concern with ideas and their transmissions and, not to anyone's surprise, a marvellous technical command. The selector, Jens-Rudiger Lorinzen (with others, notably Paul Derrez and, one assumes, Fritz Falk), has done a much better job on the whole in a difficult situation — there are so many jewellers in West Germany and all the artists one would expect to see were present. Indeed, they deserve an entire review by themselves and I regret that space does not permit such justice. One significant aspect of the German installation that does bear comment was the use of excellent accompanying photographs, photographs, however, that in many cases gave truth to the observation that much contemporary jewellery is superb in a manipulated circumstance of interaction between model, piece and camera but often much less successful as an object for sustained gallery contemplation, let alone as a wearable.

Much more can be written about this exhibition. In a recent issue of *Crafts* magazine, Paul Derrez wrote, rather contentiously, in regard to the exhibition, "Great Britain produced highly innovative work during the 1970's, which was stimulating and trend-setting, but now it looks as if ten years of Thatcherism have drained the red blood and left imagination faint — as far as jewellery is concerned. Dreams are suppressed by realities, or by the forces of commerce or prestige. Communal panache bows out, leaving the stage to the dull or the egotistical."

Is this a true picture of British jewellery today? Is there any evidence to contradict this view? (I think there is.) Have the scope and parameters of the jewellery discussion merely changed to another track, or have they been extinguished? I wish we had been given the opportunity to find out. We weren't.

James Evans is Principal Lecturer and Course Leader for the Wood, Metal, Ceramics and Plastics course in the Department of Textiles and Three-Dimensional Design at Brighton Polytechnic in England.

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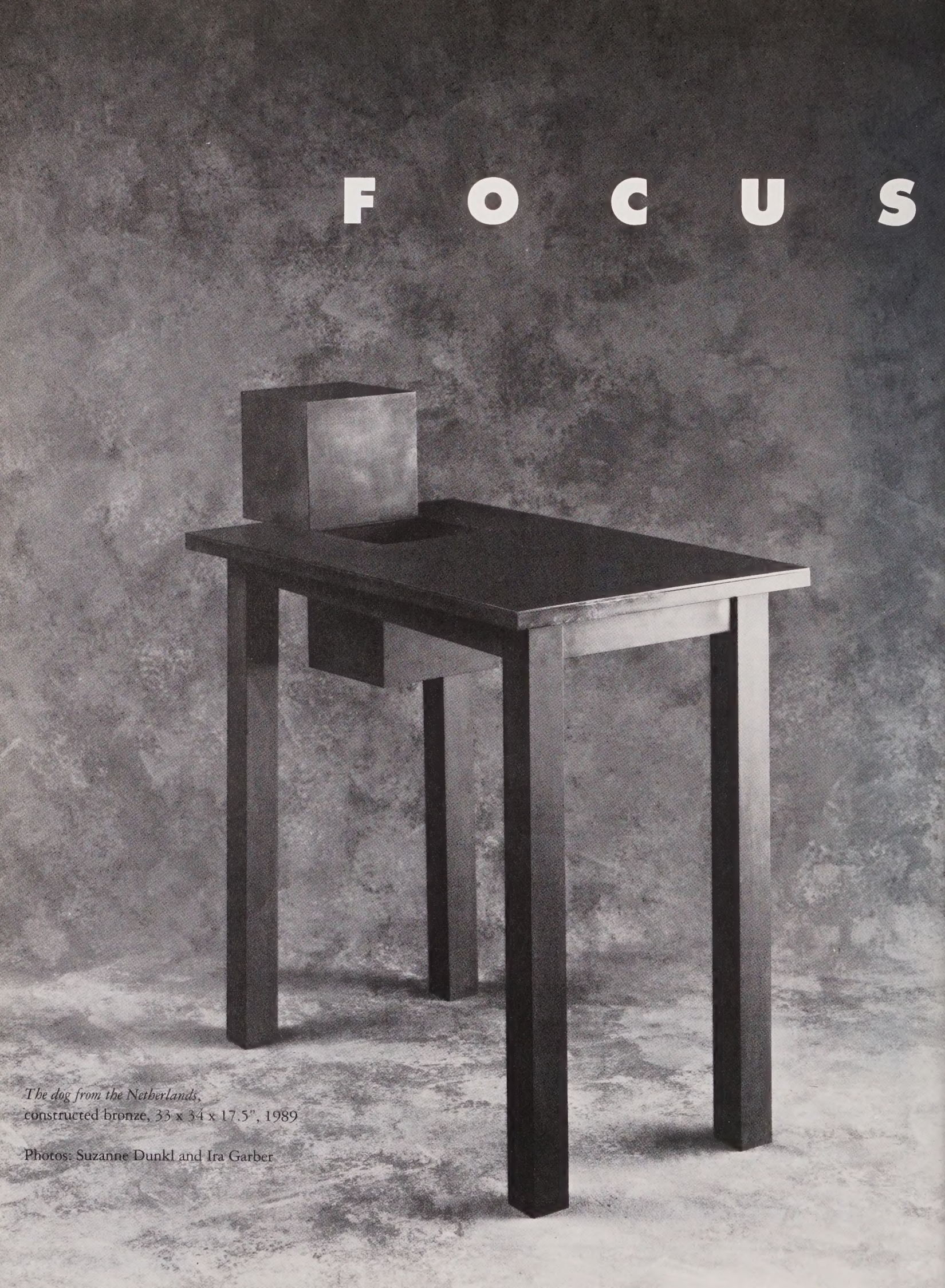


The dog from the Netherlands,
constructed bronze, 33 x 34 x 17.5", 1989

Photos: Suzanne Dunkl and Ira Garber

Louis Mueller **Synergistic Games**

by Addison Parks

The confidential exploits of self-deception **is the title of one of Louis Mueller's recent six-foot-high wall pieces. This paradoxical attitude perhaps best describes Mueller's ongoing body of work, which is at once furniture and sculpture, wallmounts and body mounts, sleekly industrial and disarmingly vernacular. The following essay by Addison Parks explores the momentum and possibilities in Mueller's work.**

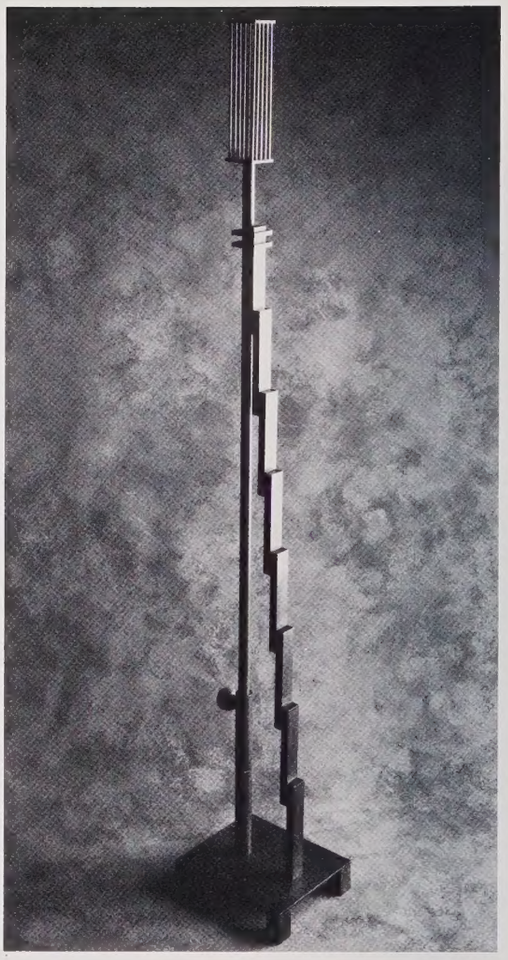
■

There is a sense to this new work that something is about to happen. It is what Louis Mueller calls "anticipation." It is the thing we experience in the work. It is as though when we see a particular sculpture, we have caught it in motion, interrupted its play and our presence has frozen it; we have stumbled in on it and it plays dead, only to carry on once our back is turned. We could swear it's moving, but it's not. Out of the corner of our eye it teases us; in a dead start it won't budge. It is this sense of anticipation that makes the work move. Indeed, it is what makes Louis Mueller move.

With anticipation comes possibility, and that implies risks and the unknown — a built-in uncertainty, a kind of game. The game locates us in a set of circumstances to see what can happen. Louis Mueller creates a structure, a confine, *a game*, to allow something to happen — a few players, a game board, what's the next move. Something gets set in motion, and the momentum keeps it going, changing, creating new sets of possibilities. How the shapes and structures of the sculpture move us through the work is very complex. Each one is like a variation on a game, but is different, and the rules keep changing. The quality of the experience is altered by the various components, whose character and connection to each other determines the spatial and three-dimensional outcome of the work. It is a game of pure geometric form — hooked up to create a circuit of energy, a machine, a complete being. All of this is simply stated, resulting in an appearance that is quiet, elegant and charming. This couldn't be more deceiving. The concision of the work masks a complexity that won't sit still.

The look of the sculpture is cool, but it is not for lack of emotion. Despite the formality of its geometry, the uniformity of its dark exterior and its hard and sometimes sharp edges and points, it has patinas that soften and warm the surface and produce an occasional bright color. The geometry is almost always foiled by some deviation, some awkwardness, some twist in the work, revealing a distinct and prominent trait that humanizes the machine. Even the possible impression that the work is emotionally restrained would be premature. The work respects emotions, yet refuses to indulge them. The feelings are there, but, like the work of the Constructivists, this work is as much pure feelings as pure form, with equal reverence for both. Emotion is measured thoughtfully, with a profound knowledge of how delicate and fine it is. It is perhaps the good fun of this work, the sense of play and mischievousness, that masks those feelings. Beneath the jaunty angularity of this sculpture is something enduring, sensitive and warm.

A form of this essay appeared in the catalog of the recent exhibition of Louis Mueller's work at the Helen Drutt Gallery, New York City. The 24-page catalog is available from Helen Drutt Gallery, 724 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY 10019 for $15 plus $1.50 postage (NY State residents add sales tax).



Lost sequences from an immortal time, constructed bronze, 76 x 10 x 12", 1989

Each sculpture has a personality, determined by a particular sense of who and what it is and can be. And at the same time that the work is personal enough to risk being private to the point of exclusion, it responds in kind. It engenders a quality of mutual respect in this regard. It does not take liberties with the viewer. It respects the viewer's space and sense of self. Instead of seeking to outright challenge, manipulate or change the viewer, it invites them to play. Instead of pandering to their emotions, sense of trend or correct social or political thinking, it seeks to engage them in an adventure. Instead of lecturing and imposing itself, it offers a space to just be. Rather than displace us, or even locate us, this sculpture provides the space for us to locate ourselves. This is one of the qualities of the work that is answering its time. Like it or not, it is the gift of a new age.

The work is benign in most respects. It is open despite its polite game masks. It is civilized to the point where it could rarely be militant. It is not armored or threatening but instead demonstrates a tendency towards domesticity and the pleasures of the mind. Objects represented in the sculptures as components of the game bear this out. These playgrounds have chairs, tables, ladders, cups, as well as one of the artist's fascinations, the tools of the chemistry lab. The work has one thing, however, that is perhaps threatening, and that is its maleness. A few of the machines become extreme in this regard. In many ways much of the work seems to reflect the awkward position the male finds himself in today. The size in particular suggests this. For so long men have made each other larger than life. As this work is about human scale, it looks small. The image of male and maleness is actually more vulnerable than threatening. Doubt and pain are present. Yes, the maleness is there in the work, but the erect posture is more a show of pride than strength. This is not so much something sexual or erotic as symbolic of something that has changed, something men have lost.

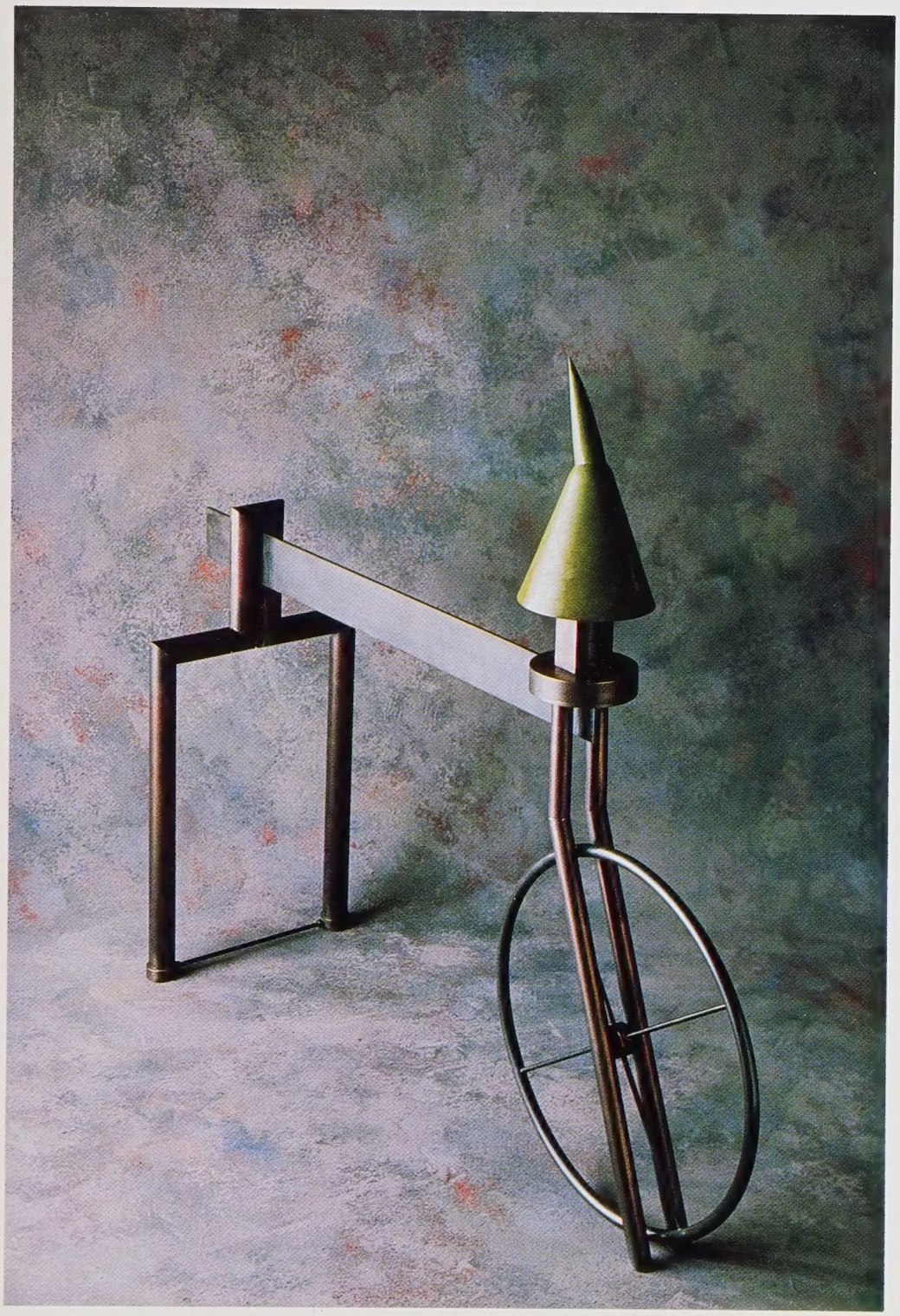
Soft spoken and intelligent, the voice of this work is poetic. Its arrangements are simple and short but full and complete like a poem. And yet, it is an arrangement without ever being arranged. It is a composition that instead results from choices made both internally and externally, from the unconscious, from a sense of possibility and from the very act of doing. For this it shares the spirit of jazz and Surrealism and has Modernism in general to thank for an unprecedented freedom of form. A form that is more the vessel for the artist's passions — sexual, emotional or intellectual — more than a playground for his games, but a form that is really the bones of the work, with the passions at its marrow. It is the structure which makes this work inside and out and for that it owes a debt to Minimalism. It is also structure that provides the framework for the space of this newest work, more space than Louis Mueller has defined to this point, a larger physical space to allow us more freedom of movement within the parameters of the work. This larger game, because of its size, allows us more than space for our minds but actual room to play. This makes the new work more of a playground than a game board, especially because it is freestanding, unlike the earlier work.

As it becomes more the playground, the new work opens up and the openness of the space makes the work itself more accessible. The more physical and less precious dimensions mean that we can respond likewise. Furthermore, the possibilities become even greater on every level. We can play the more open-ended play of children, losing ourselves in the adventure of each sculpture as we take the time.

Finally, much of the potency of this work lies in its contradictions. Contradiction is the source of this work's quiet and satisfying strength and the real depth of its pleasure beneath the stylish exterior. Foremost it is the work's ability to suggest motion and be still. Then it is the way it is cool and transmits warmth. It is also its commitment to craft, refinement and polish that says at the same time it's all really about fun. And then it is the abiding faith in pure form and art's history, tradition and convention that simultaneously thumbs an irreverent nose at anyone who would enforce the rules. Louis Mueller's work is finally about itself.

Addison Parks is a painter and writer living in Providence, RI.

Water Walker, tightrope dancer,
contructed bronze, 42 x 49 x 14", 1988



Color, Construction and Change

The Inventive Jewelry of Earl Pardon

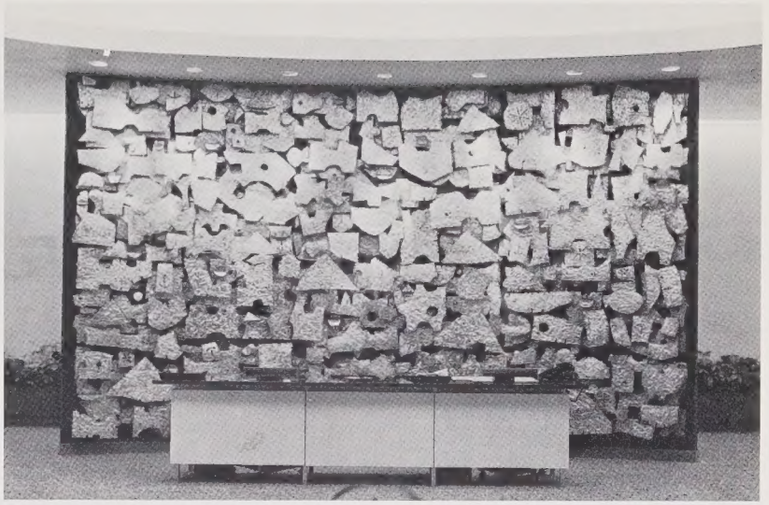
by Sharon Church

Earl Pardon's work has an elusive quality that is difficult to describe, yet this quality has motivated him throughout years of prodigious jewelry making. For four decades he has worked with an energy and curiosity that seems only to have intensified. His passion for the ongoing process of discovery is revealed in the very nature of his inquiry. His fascination with experimentation and his willingness to allow for an interplay with chance have combined to bring a singular vitality to his oeuvre. Since the early 1950s, Pardon's jewelry has displayed a vibrancy that has kept pace with decades of change. Our appreciation deepens as we examine his work against the development of jewelry/metalsmithing as a whole. Stylistically, he has moved with the interests and tastes of our culture, from primitivism through modernism into a highly individualized statement of the 80s. His current work is elegantly precious, yet it resounds with an almost cacophonous brilliance of color and light.

Pardon belongs to the first generation of jewelers and metalsmiths who spawned the studio jewelry movement in America. While trained as a painter at The Memphis Academy of Art, where his education and ambitions were caught up in the traditions of that discipline, even as a student, he was fascinated by jewelrymaking and its expressive potential. Attendance at the 1950 silversmithing workshop sponsored by Handy and Harman catalyzed his interest into a serious pursuit. This session put him in touch with others who shared an enthusiasm for jewelrymaking, but, for the most part, these artists worked in relative isolation, in studios scattered across the country. Pardon, like many of his contemporaries, is primarily self-taught. There was, for him, no movement as we see it now, no notion of collective thinking, no sense of fraternity, no regular forum for dialogue. Exhibitions and catalogs were rare and eagerly anticipated opportunities for exchange. Coming mostly from a fine arts training, Pardon was not steeped in the history or traditions of jewelry/metalsmithing. In many ways he made up his own rules. For him there was a very real excitement about the inventions and new approaches to form that were only possible in this newly rediscovered medium.

If there was a community for these artists, it existed in New York, where a few — Ed Wiener, Sam Kramer and Art Smith among them — were designing and making their own jewelry and marketing it with great success. Pardon came to know them through studio visits and discussions. For a while, he and fellow Memphis jeweler/artist Dorothy Sturm contemplated joining forces to open a gallery there, but, ultimately, Pardon sought the relative seclusion of teaching over the pressures of a commercial venture. From 1951 until his retirement this past spring, Pardon has taught in the Art Department of Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. There, his ideas about jewelry developed in a most private manner, fed by his interest in the visual arts and the frank joy he felt in the making.

In the early 1950s Pardon was deeply interested in primitive art. Like many other artists, he must have been influenced by major exhibitions bringing work from Africa and Oceania into public view. But Pardon was perhaps more intrigued by the spirit behind the work than by the artifacts themselves. His curiosity led



Left: 1. Necklace, *sterling silver, rosewood, 9½ x 4½", 1955. Courtesy: Fifty/50 Gallery, New York City.*

Above: 2. Sculptural Screen, *brass, copper, bronze, nickel, 10 x 17', 1960. Collection: Corporate headquarters, Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, NJ*

him to collect works, especially from South and Central America, and he made subsequent trips to Mexico to experience the land and the people. It was the raw, unspoken power embodied in these works that he sought to understand. This led him to explore the figure in terms of its most elemental shapes. Simple forms, carefully arranged, represented complex organisms that the viewer imbued with emotion and character (see *Figure 1*). The work that resulted had an animation, as of stilt-legged creatures ambling across the space of the pectoral or around the wrist. Through combining many separate elements into a single piece, Pardon created a kind of visual gestalt and, at the same time, brought a jazzlike rhythm and relative complexity to his work.

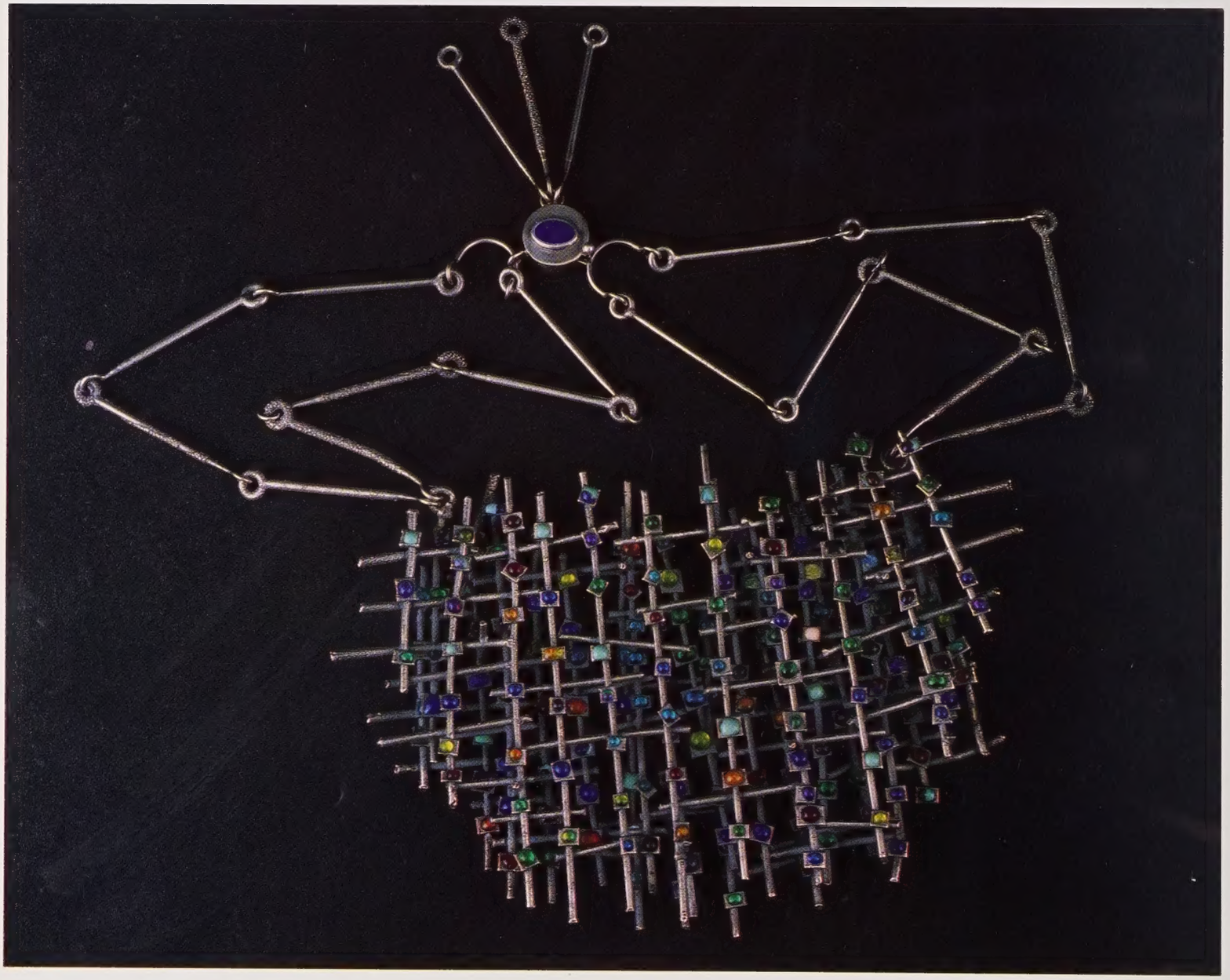
It is important to note that for the greater part of his creative life Pardon has been simultaneously a painter, sculptor and jeweler. But while his artistic pursuits have led him to investigate a range of art forms, it was jewelrymaking that provided him with an enduring format most sympathetic to his mode of inquiry. And it was the jewelry he made in this era that earned him early critical recognition. In 1954, the Chiku-Rin Gallery in Detroit showed Pardon's jewelry in a two-person exhibition with Joseph Albers's paintings, and, six years later, Pardon exhibited his jewelry at The Witherspoon Art Gallery in Greensboro, North Carolina, with the work of such other artists as Milton Avery, Saul Baizerman, Charles Eames, Max Ernst and Leon Golub. The importance of studio jewelry as an emerging art form is underscored by the stature of artists shown in these exhibitions. Earl Pardon was a leading studio jeweler of this decade. He looked to Harry Bertoia as a mentor and found contemporaries in Bob Winston, Merry Renk, John Paul Miller, Betty Cooke and Ed Levin.

In the mid-50s Pardon took a year's leave of absence from teaching to design for Towle Silversmiths, where he developed the enamel technology behind Towle's popular Revere Bowl. Problems had arisen in enameling the interior of this semispherical form: as the bowl cooled, it warped. Pardon devised collar-type rings out of iron to hold the bowl as it went into the kiln and out again, stabilizing its shape throughout the process.

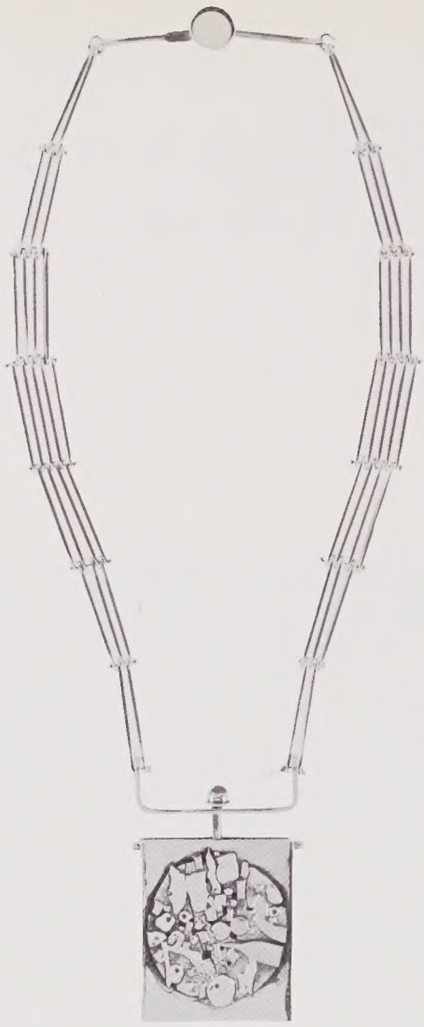
Not surprisingly, Pardon's interest in enameling spilled over into his personal work, and at just about this same time we see the introduction of enamel into his jewelry. Initially this inclusion of brilliant color was restrained, its use more like that of a punctuation mark. But it heralded Pardon's reputation as an enamelist and established the integration of this technology into his work. Enameling would provide a venue for unifying his activities as painter and jeweler. Previously his paintings — chromatic, glowing, layered and glazed — had given Pardon a singular arena for exploring color and luminosity. Now these concerns emerged in his jewelry as well. Similarly, the structures that had evolved at the bench began to feed an interest in sculpture. He started working on large metal pieces by brazing and welding but fabricated them according to his sensibilities as a jeweler. By 1960, Pardon found himself working back and forth, in whatever material, technique or scale fascinated him, with an appetite for visual and tactile experience that kept him busy on several projects at a time.

When modernism took hold of the art world, it simultaneously swept crafts from critical view. But by then Pardon's reputation had expanded to include painting and sculpture. In 1960, The Prudential Insurance Company of America commissioned Pardon to make a large metal screen for their reception area (*Figure 2*).

Necklace
silver, enamel, c. 1960
Courtesy: Fifty/50 Gallery, NYC



Reversible Bracelet
copper, brass, silver, ebony, rosewood, ivory, c. 1955
Collection: Eunice Pardon
Photo courtesy: Aaron Faber Gallery, NY



Left: 3. Necklace, *(reversible; back view), silver, 14k gold, cloisonné enamel, ebony, tourmaline, 1980*

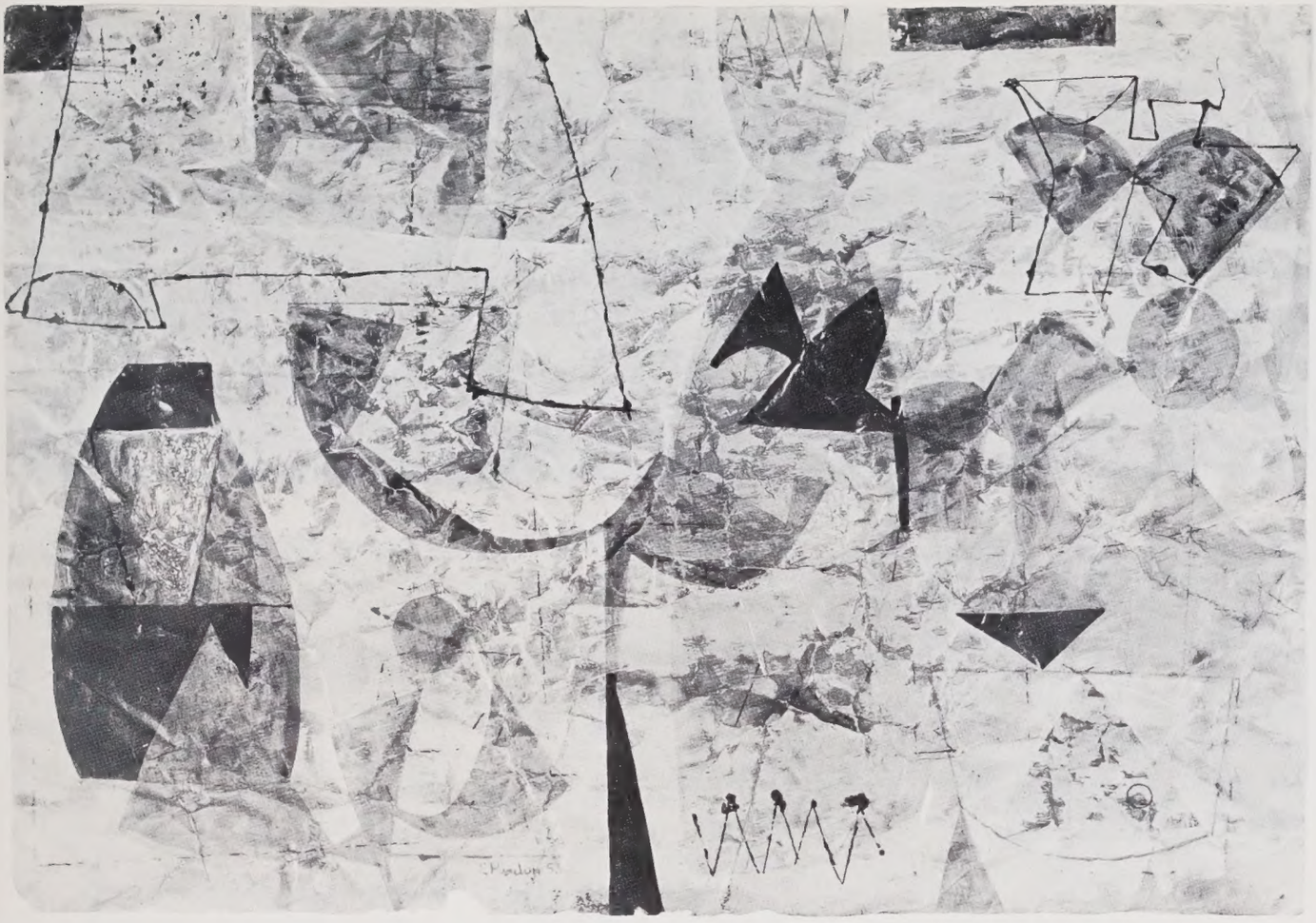
Right: 5. Flight of Time *(also called* Trapeze*), watercolor, 17 x 22", 1953*

The methods he had developed earlier — building up a whole through combining many smaller parts — lent itself to the somewhat modular construction that characterizes this piece. The screen does not have the purely formal concerns of his later work, but rather forms a kind of bridge to the future. There lurk within traces of the artist's past interest in the primitive. Placement of cuts and holes in relatively simple shapes evokes images of animals, the sun, the figure. But one cannot be sure — there is an ambiguity that makes this piece suggestive. The images are obscured as the rhythmic organization of form, pattern and surface takes precedence.

Looking back, one can trace the sensibility to materials and technology that has remained constant against Pardon's evolving ideas about function and form. From his earliest jewelrymaking, he evidences a love for the natural and the organic. He uses the warm, earthy tones of ebony, ivory, teak and coral to color the work. In them he finds a richly subdued palette that contrasts effectively with the wide–ranging brilliance — even audacity — of enamels and colored gemstones. The shapes that he uses remain, from the beginning, quite modest. Complexity builds through repetition. It is a repetition of similar, not identical, elements, however. Pardon's designs are never machinelike, but rather refer to a more organic generation of form. In the 60s he picks up a rhythm and efficiency that is established through the use of modular-type elements. Coincidentally, he develops techniques that allow him to keep pace with his outpouring of ideas. Figurative elements recede. Color, construction, rhythm, repetition and change are concerns that surface throughout his many different studio activities.

Pardon emerged in the 70s a mature artist. But these years were not easy. Between 1968 and 1977 Pardon taught painting, enameling, sculpture and jewelry while chairing the Art Department at Skidmore. And still he continued to produce. Teaching provided him one avenue of exploration — his classes were based on ideas or processes that intrigued him at the time. In his enameling courses he encouraged students to explore nontraditional methods, treating sheet copper as a pliable ground, distorting then coloring the form with enamel powder that could be made to act like paint. A course he offered in kinetic sculpture was directly connected to his admiration for Harry Bertoia and George Rickey. Through welding technologies he had students experience the silently elegant movement of large, heavy steel forms, appropriately weighted and levered. His excitement in a student's progress instilled feelings of communal accomplishment, and the studio was alive with a shared enthusiasm for process, experiment and discovery.

As both teacher and artist, Pardon investigated various jewelry techniques but gravitated, always, toward fabrication and enameling. By the end of the 70s, his jewelry had become cooler in feeling and visually more complex, incorporating his own observations about physical movement relative to the human form. Balled wire and the drilled hole — a most basic ball-and-socket joint — form the backbone of pieces built of individual wires. The necklaces are composed of lines cut and gathered into configurations that have an airy strength. His pendants, like canvasses, are backdrops for a build-up of dot and line that is massively delicate. Spots of color dance throughout. Areas of relative simplicity — parallel wires or a single plane — are broken by perpendicular elements rhythmically



separating and pacing the eye through each piece (*Figure 3*).

Though the 70s was a time when Pardon's energies were dissipated by so many demands, these years seem, in retrospect, to have been fodder for the burst of creative output that accompanied his return to full-time teaching. Once freed of the obligations of administration, Pardon, for the first time in his life, focused exclusively on jewelrymaking.

After years of developing in so many directions, why did Pardon suddenly devote his entire effort to a single artform? Was it simply that his jewelrymaking had evolved to incorporate and satisfy his many disparate interests? Enameling enabled him to explore the potential for graphic organization and color theory normally held to be within the purview of painting. His interest in making sculpture waned as his brooches became more dimensional. But perhaps most compelling was that Pardon found the materials and techniques of jewelrymaking to be, finally, most sympathetic to his needs as a maker.

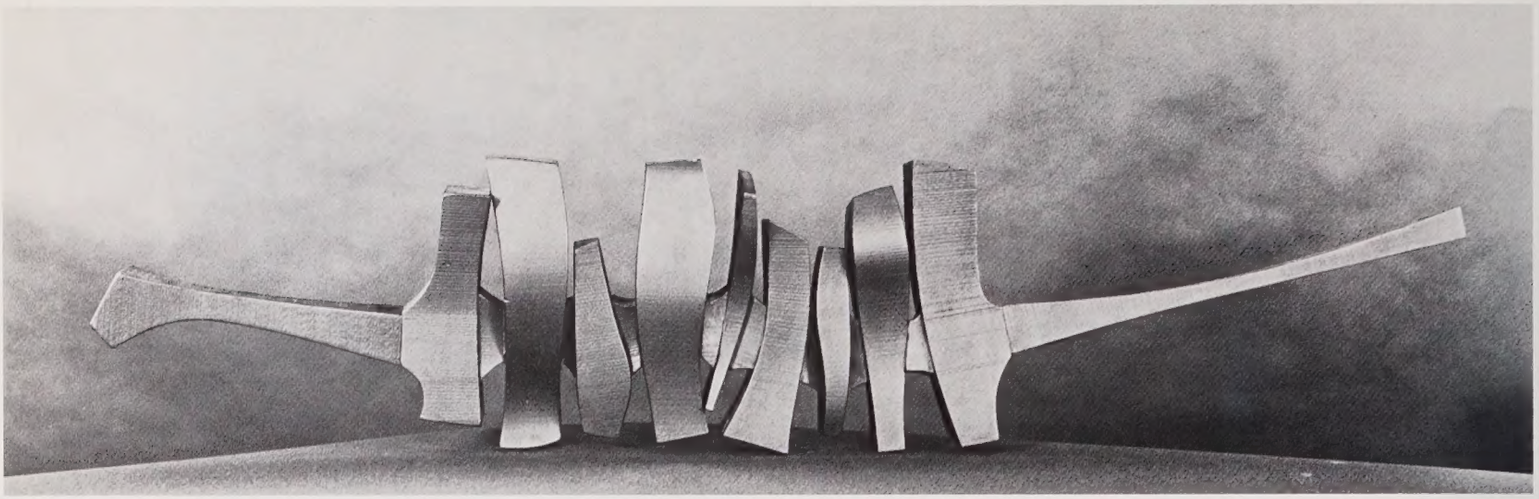
When Pardon first sat down to make jewelry, it was, for him, "an immediate love affair." The resistant materials rendered endless possibilities for arrangement and manipulation. The scale was nonintimidating, both to artist and wearer. Jewelry offered an intimacy of exchange and a preciousness that had to do more with connotations of size than cost of material. Moreover, to an artist with little training in its traditions, this artform presented endless opportunity for experiment; it was a true venture into the unknown.

Ultimately, the skills Pardon developed as a jeweler enabled him to make with a speed consonant with his need to produce. No other artform allowed him to work dimensionally with a rigor that paced with his thinking. It became increasingly important to make with speed: he anticipated producing a piece in one day. Working in series, each piece begins with the one that came before; thus he works within a continuum that acts to feed his compulsion. And it is this unfolding delight in the making that continues to inspire him.

That he is inspired there can be no doubt. His last exhibition at the Aaron Faber Gallery in New York boasted more than 200 works created in a nine-month period. His output is extraordinary, if not confounding. He is a most disciplined artist, at the bench from nine to five almost daily. He works to satisfy himself and is sustained largely through an experiential mode of working. His bench is a chaos of tools and materials and bits of pieces in progress. Pardon works to see what can happen — what is possible — and out of this emerges the piece.

In Pardon's current jewelry he has developed methods of fabrication that allow him to build a visual complexity within his self-imposed, rather compressed time frame. Almost always, the work is constructed of similar elements that are soldered, hinged or linked together in a very straightforward way. This repetition of form and junction establishes a consistency that becomes a background for the unexpected. Pardon delights in surprise. Through precise placement of unexpected form or color, that which is anticipated is altered or abandoned. Change, the unpredictable, becomes a primary element in his designs.

Conceptually, Pardon's concerns are purely formal. He works with lines and planes to create pieces jammed with color, sparkle and luminosity. Often he relies on the standard jewelry format of a hinged bracelet with clasp or flat brooch with pin-back, as a



Above: 6. Black Dorsal, *sculpture, cedar, redwood, 4'6" long, 1977*

painter might depend upon the traditions of canvas. They provide an unquestioned vehicle for the thoughts and gestures applied to the surface. The result is jewelry that is strongly graphic, carefully composed for visual movement through exotic combinations of riotously colored materials. It is work that jumps with a vibrancy strongly related to his paintings (*Figure 4 – see cover – and 5*).

When Pardon makes jewelry that refers more to his sculpture (*Figure 6*) however, he stretches the tradition of the accepted format. In 1981 he visited Italy, where he was stirred by the idea of the fibula brooch. Soon after he began a series of tubular enameled fibula pins that were quite active dimensionally. In the late 70s, his brooches of carved ivory and ebony took their stance from his sculpture. Compared to the flat, paintinglike pieces, these works were far more robust, and had to be handled and turned, as an object, to be fully appreciated. Their slightly oversized scale and rigorous angular profiles sit in striking contrast to the human form. Interestingly, Pardon has most recently introduced colored panels of enamels and gemstones to the plane faces of these dimensional brooches, suggesting that his divergent interests in painting and sculpture might finally combine into a single, unified jewelry statement.

But it is difficult to imagine what will come. Where working in a series format might invite speculation, even predictability, Pardon remains open to a chance encounter. He welcomes the outside influence of external stimuli, playing around with any idea that interests him. His excitement about a historic piece, or his admiration for a fellow artist, may suddenly evidence itself in his work. Change and variation are not only elements in his designs but are integral to his growth. Each piece is an experiment; successes and failures are relative only to the ongoing search. For him, it is the next piece that is all important.

Those artists who move through the years in step with our culture have gained stature not only through their esthetic contributions, but also because of their abilities to define and interpret a continuum that to others seems disjointed, enigmatic or unsure. Earl Pardon's 40-year commitment to jewelrymaking offers us a mirror through which we begin to understand some of the transitions that have characterized and altered the growth of modern jewelry. His oeuvre is all the more remarkable when considered for the simultaneous contribution he makes to our history and our ongoing development. As both artist and teacher, Earl Pardon has played a significant role in the development of 20th-century art jewelry.

Sharon Church is Chairperson of Crafts and Assistant Professor of Jewelry/Metalsmithing at the University of the Arts, Philadelphia College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, PA. She studied with Earl Pardon at Skidmore College in 1969–70.

Earrings and brooches, *sterling silver, 14k gold, enamel, ivory, ebony, shell and gemstones. Courtesy: Aaron Faber Gallery, New York*

Bruce Metcalf

FOCUS

Bruce Metcalf's recent exhibition *Between Darkness and Light* thematically embraces and continues his ongoing concern with an anguished sensibility wedged between disenchantment and hope. Immediately striking is his pervasive use of sociological, political and psychological topics. The implications and intentions behind Metcalf's jewelry are explored here by C.E. Licka.

Between Darkness and Light

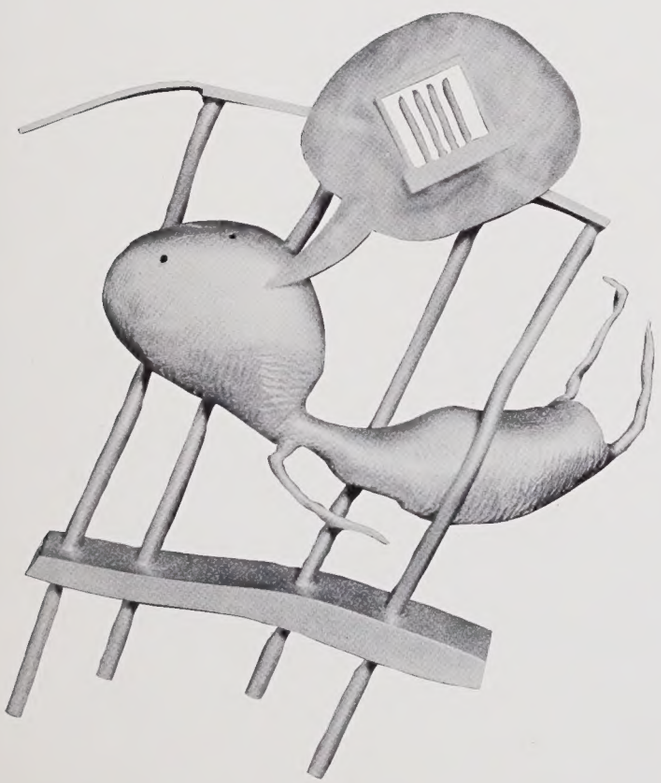
by C.E. Licka

Can jewelry be an effective agent in addressing today's social, political and psychological problems? From the standpoint of using jewelry as a critically charged space, Bruce Metcalf's tableaux all seem to derive from a need for emotional catharsis due to the possibility of nuclear annihilation, alienation, the plight of the consumer and the emotional upheaval and pressures of our postindustrial age. Each of his works is anecdotal, a highly compressed vignette with stylized characters, who vent the anxieties of "everyman" and "everywoman."

For example, in his brooch *Crushed*, there is a grimacing figure with a distended neck, leguminous head, ovoid eyes, truncated torso and atrophied limbs pressed between two pieces of black pumice. These elements are set against a softly textured, gray-and-orange field drawn on mylar. The gray zone of the drawing, with its repetitive spongelike pattern, subtly echos the porous surface of the volcanic rock. The figure is being crushed between the viselike grip of the rocks, reflecting one of Metcalf's major concerns over the years — emotional pain and alienation. *Niche with Figure* incorporates a figure that wraps itself up in its own desolation and in *Mr. J. Speaks* the figure is imprisoned in bars. Even Mr. J's symbolic utterance streaming from his mouth in a cartoon balloon contains the image of a cage reinforcing the nightmarish world of psychic entrapment.

Metcalf has consistently tried to "touch" the public by creating jewelry and miniature sculpture illustrative of contemporary life. He views his pins "as documents or editorial cartoons in the manner of Daumier and Walt Kelly." Seen from this perspective, Metcalf's sensibility and style has a great deal to do with the tradition of caricature. By deforming and exaggerating the characteristics of the human figure, his voice is one of skepticism, aggressively attacking social injustices, political ideologies and current social mores. As a liberating process, caricature allows Metcalf to get beneath the skin of reality and expose the absurdity of the human condition.

Metcalf's figurative style has evolved over the years into a complex family of forms. For example, the hydrocephalic heads and vestigial limbs are quite different from his attenuated and angular, sticklike bodies. His figures change, but the way he renders them remains consistent. They are always stripped down to their rudimentary functions and emotions, with a linear economy, executed in the precise manner of an illustrator.



Far left: Crushed, *silver, rock, plexiglass, drawing on mylar, 3½ x 2¼ ", 1989; Left:* Mr. J. Speaks, *silver, plexiglass, paint, 4 x 3½ ", 1989*

Left: Headful of Bad Ideas, *silver, 4 x 3", 1989*
Right: Niche with Figure, *silver, paint, 3¼ x 2½", 1989*

His earlier brooches called *Hammerhead with 2 Bombs* and *Catching the Bomb I & II*, like his recent piece, *Niche with Figure*, are reminiscent of the allegorical cartoons favored by Bosch, Bracelli, Petitot, Grandville and Vertbleu, where they substitute recognizable objects for heads or other body parts. Vertbleu satirized the jury of the Salon of 1840 as being "stupid" or "headless" by replacing their heads with an upended jug, a loaf of bread and a knife, or a violin. In comparison, Metcalf's bomb-headed figure, trying to catch a bomb, is just as absurd and "headless" in its attempt to capture the seeds of its own destruction. Allegory, like caricature, gives us "types" for the express purpose of conveying universal ideas. This is the world of John and Jane Doe, the "everyman" and "everywoman" viewers can identify with.

Metcalf adapts the comic-strip balloon as a way to frame or provide a cartouche around the space of his jewelry, forming an "allegorial ornament." In other words, he uses fragmented visual units within a circumscribed whole so as to produce a literal discontinuity. An example of this from history might be Lorenzo Monaco's late 14th-century *Pieta*, which portrays a crucifix, decapitated saint's heads, portions of arms and hands and a host of Christian symbols floating above Christ. In our century, Peter Blume's painting, *Elemosina* (1933) depicts Christ seated with a series of objects, such as watches, flowers in a vase, hearts and jewelry, orbiting around him.

In a similar fashion, Metcalf's brooch, *Consumer's Hell*, depicts a seated "everyman," isolated and with his hands on his head in apparent despair. Circling around him are ladders and mechanical contrivances. In *A Present from the Government*, our allegorical hero cringes in fear as bundles of missles float overhead.

Headful of Bad Ideas consists of an inflated head framed by forged-wire balloons with soldered AK–47s and semiautomatic rifles. *Headlock* depicts a female figure with her head tightly wrapped with a band and secured by a lock. The references to pain are incisively illustrated as the interior world of infinite migraines. Surrounding this figure is a constellation of keys and entangling wires. These "dream keys" seem to offer a way to unlock and break the oppressive band of some uncontrollable force. But, ironically, there appears to be no way out of this psychic impasse.

To a certain extent, Metcalf's jewelry does reach out and touch his audience with a sensitive and emotional form of visual journalese. These are "readable" universal messages filtered through an anguished psyche. One of the risks he has taken is to embrace caricature and allegorical ornament in a discipline that is far from adversarial. There is no question about Metcalf's need to expose his spleen and engender emotions in the viewer. These emotions may be amorphous and difficult to pinpoint, but he does seem to voice the "angst" of "everyman" and "everywoman." In looking at these caricatures and allegories mirroring our world, one enters the universe of this jester's caprices where the "sleep of reason produces monsters" and where we all can momentarily wear the motley.

Bruce Metcalf's jewelry was recently shown at the CDK Gallery in New York.

C.E. Licka teaches art history at Southeastern Massachusetts University in New Bedford.

"SILVER BILL"

William Spratling

Creator of Modern Taxco Silver

by Toni Lesser Wolf

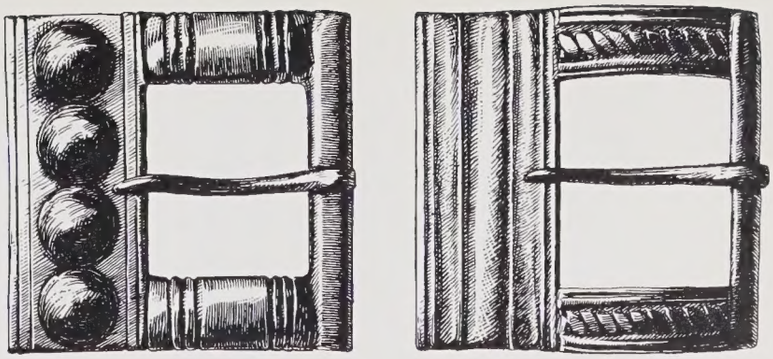
For the past 60 years, tourists visiting Mexico have sought distinctive silver jewelry and holloware, crafted by native artisans. Although the designs they find are, for the most part, adapted from pre-Columbian clay seals and executed by Mexican silversmiths, the current industry was actually begun in the 1920s by an American architect, William Spratling. Spratling combined the geometric abstraction of modern architecture with indigenous Mexican motifs, both Indian and Hispanic, to produce a unique style that was to influence jewelry design both in Mexico and in the United States.

Taxco is a small city in the state of Guerrero, where silver mining had been the primary industry since 1528, when Cortez sent envoys there to acquire metal for Spain. Mining gradually decreased as richer deposits were discovered elsewhere and the Spanish settlers turned to farming. However, in 1716, José de la Borda, a Spanish colonial of French extraction, discovered a rich vein of silver in the mountains surrounding Taxco and thereby made his fortune. Borda invested much of his money in Taxco, building roads, houses and the magnificent cathedral, Santa Prisca. Eventually, squandering his wealth, he sold the Taxco mines, which were then worked only sporadically over the next 200 years.

Spratling first visited Taxco in the summer of 1926 to study Spanish colonial architecture. At that time he was an assistant professor in the department of architecture at Tulane University, in New Orleans. After returning to New Orleans in the fall, he longed for Mexico and her people, especially his artist/friends, Diego Rivera, Miguel Covorrubias and David Sigueiros. Commissioned in 1929 to write a book that pictured life in a Mexican village, he decided to live in Mexico until the book's completion. He bought a house in Taxco, which he named Calle de las Delicias, near the Plaza de la Borda, and settled there to write *Little Mexico*. The book was completed in three years. Nevertheless, Spratling lived in the same house for an additional 13 years. He remained there, motivated by a desire to improve Taxco's economy and encourage the community's artistic spirit. He conceived a plan to revive the once flourishing silver mines and to produce metalworks for sale.

Until the late 1920s, the majority of silver objects being produced in Mexico were in the Spanish Colonial style — artisans limiting their output to traditional basins, candlesticks and ecclesiastical wares. The only silver designs that could be considered innovative were those being executed by another American, Fred Davis, whose shop was located in Mexico City. Spratling's scheme did not initially meet with enthusiasm among the local people, who couldn't imagine anyone wanting to buy jewelry made from silver, preferring, instead, traditional gold filigree jewelry and gold–plated brass belt buckles. Furthermore, there were no local artisans to fabricate his designs. The only silversmith in Taxco was Don Moloton Gomez, who was 80 years old, nearly blind and who crafted only an occasional spoon or saddle ornament. Spratling decided to import silversmiths from Iguala, the town just south of Taxco, where gold was worked. Although the local "plateros" considered it beneath their dignity to waste their artistry on the cheaper metal, Spratling finally pursuaded two boys, who were good goldsmiths, to come to Taxco.

One of them was Artemio Navarrete, who met "Don Guillermo" (Spratling) around 1925. He stated that "at the time, rather than buying silver from a bank, one-peso silver coins were



Above: Two heavy belt buckles, *c. 1934, probably .980 silver.*
Reproduced from Mexican Jewelry *by Mary L. Davis and Greta pack, copyright 1963 by the authors.*
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Below: Neckpeice, *c. 1940, sterling silver and amethysts.*
Collection: The Château Dufresne, The Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts, The Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection.
Photo: Richard Goodbody.

Neckpiece, *c. 1955, sterling silver and tortoise shell. Photo: Jan Frank.*

smelted to make artworks. Coins were minted from .925 sterling silver. Don Guillermo visited my small workshop in Iguala and ordered a silver ring, which I was to make following his design and using a stone he provided. Later, he placed other orders that I made following his designs, ornamenting the articles with Grecian frets and using the stones, generally jade or onyx, which were then found in the area."[1] Soon Spratling imported Navarrette to Taxco. Needing assistance, Navarette convinced some children, who would bathe in the fountain at Spratling's home, to help him wash, polish or beat the silver into sheets. Toño Castillo and Antonio Piñeda, who went on to open important silversmith shops of their own, were among these boys.

In 1931, Spratling rented a semiruin, called La Aduana (The Customs House), as a production shop. Silver belt buckles and bracelets, which borrowed ranch motifs, such as ropes, straps and balls, were their first pieces. At this juncture, workmanship tended to be crude, but the formal statements were already strong. When tourists bought these naively wrought silver objects with great enthusiasm, La Aduana was on its way, sometimes selling up to 100 pesos worth of jewelry a day. The shop expanded and Spratling added a group of tinsmiths, carpenters and an iron worker. He was dedicated to encouraging native talent and relates in his autobiography how, one evening, some Indians from Coatepec came to his home to sell serapes that they had woven. Upon seeing the textiles, he casually suggested that someday they might like to set up their looms at this shop in Taxco. One day, three families appeared with their looms loaded on six mules.[2] They joined La Aduana, which was moved to larger quarters in 1934 and renamed Taller de las Delicias. Under Spratling's guidance, the shop was fast becoming an important center for the folk arts of weaving and furnituremaking, as well as silversmithing and jewelrymaking. As Spratling states in his autobiography, "...my background made it a natural to take up where other people had left off and achieve a certain amount of improvement in the silver, the tin, the furniture and the weavings, since an architect is primarily concerned with materials and their possibilities particularly in design."[3]

Las Delicias prospered from the beginning. The road linking Mexico City and Taxco had been completed in 1927 and tourists came in droves to buy regional crafts. The original experiment was a huge success. Local boys who showed ability were apprenticed to the smiths working at Las Delicias. "We were called 'los zoros,' or foxes, and we would spend thirty days just sweeping the floors, and then another month making the beads, the wires, then learning how to solder, to hammer the silver. In those days, there was not a blow torch, only a mouth blower. Finally, we learned to make the designs, and to produce a finished piece of jewelry."[4] The number of artisans grew; in 1940, Spratling's shop employed over 300. For the first three years, Las Delicias was the only silver shop in Taxco. But by 1940, many artisans had left to set up their own shops, some of exceptional quality, like those of Toño Castillo and Antonio Piñeda.

Spratling never taught his silversmiths technique, leaving that to the masters, but he did guide them in design. He sought inspiration in the rich and varied motifs of the pre-Hispanic Indians, combining them with the streamline sensibility of sweeping curves and unadorned surface patterning. He also adapted motifs of the Spanish colonials, such as bows and the loops and bells of *charro* (Mexican cowboy) costume ornaments. He did not believe in setting extremely precious, imported stones in silver but employed indigenous materials. "I've always had the conviction" he stated, "that certain materials have the right to be worked in a given community because they are native to that area and the work of the designer is to utilize these materials and to dignify them."[5] From the Taxco silver mines and the Balsas region just south, he obtained amethyst quartz which was cut and polished in the workshop. Dull finishes were applied to the silver to intensify its sculptural qualities and to limit the reflection of surrounding images that might cause some distortion of the forms.

The initial phase of Spratling silver ended, more or less, at this point in the early 1940s, the entire project being well regarded by the design community. Pieces had even been exhibited in 1937 at the Brooklyn Museum in "Contemporary Industrial and Handwrought Silver." With success, however, came plagiarism. Even though Spratling registered his designs, other inferior shops, unfortunately, copied them within a few weeks of their exposure on the market. Spratling relates how one imitator, Serafim Moctezuma, even went so far as to steal his hallmark by printing the WS upside down to form SM.[6]

When Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941, most of the Mexican silversmiths, concerned about capital, panicked and wanted to shut down their shops. Spratling vowed to keep production going until his money ran out, but, ironically, within two weeks of the attack, buyers from some of the finest American department stores, such as Macy's, Nieman-Marcus, Marshall Field, Tiffany & Co. and Lord & Taylor, cut off from European imports, came to Mexico, seeking luxury goods. This exceptional increase in wholesale orders led Spratling to accept outside capital and to employ over 400 smiths. In 1945, the name of the company

Left: Neckpiece, *c. 1955, sterling silver and obsidian.*
Photo: Jan Frank.

Right: "Needle" Neckpiece, *c. 1963, sterling silver and tortoise shell.*
(The same design was also made in gold set with ebony or ivory.)
Reproduced from Mexican Jewelry *by Mary L. Davis and Greta Pack,*
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was changed to Spratling y Artisanos and moved to larger quarters. However, the Mexican government, desiring to cash in on this great financial success, taxed Spratling's exports so heavily that after the War was over, the American department stores returned to silver manufacturers from abroad. Furthermore, later in 1945, an unethical American businessman, using the company as a scapegoat in a tax-evasion scheme, caused William Spratling to resign as head and Spratling y Artisanos to be dissolved.

Around this time, Spratling purchased a ranch 16 kilometers from Taxco, and, in 1947, with a small amount of capital, set up shop again, calling it Taxco-el-Viejo. One year later, through the intervention of the United States Government, Spratling's creative energy was directed farther north; consequently, his design sense was influenced by a different vernacular style.

The Indians and Eskimos of Alaska, much like the natives of Taxco, before Spratling, were in a very depressed economic situation. Small, isolated towns supported some industry during the three summer months but had no means of providing income for their inhabitants during the long winter. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was very concerned, and, in 1948, Alaska's Governor Gruening suggested to the Department of the Interior that he ask William Spratling, a personal friend, to help the Indians and Alaskan Eskimos develop an economy, based on production of native crafts, as he had done in Mexico. Spratling flew his plane to Alaska and the Arctic, studied native design and created 200 models based on indigenous stylistic traditions, in materials native to Alaska, such as silver, shell, wood, ivory, gold and baleen (an organic substance found in the jaws of whales). He then flew several Eskimos back to Taxco to learn silversmithing from the Mexicans, execute the models and return to Alaska to exhibit the articles in remote Alaskan villages, instructing, in turn, those villagers in silversmithing techniques. Although the prototypes shown in Juneau were beautifully made, they were never circulated to the remote northern areas. However, they were exhibited, with critical acclaim, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C .

Spratling's intensive study of the less convoluted Alaskan Indian motifs greatly influenced his later style in Mexico, which became simpler and less South American, relying less on borrowed Aztec, Mayan or Spanish motifs and more on universal nonrepresentational forms.

Spratling often combined silver with tortoise shell, ebony, rosewood, malachite, ivory and yellow jasper. His later output also employed gold. Spratling's designs of the 1950s and 1960s reflect the general trend in studio jewelry of that period, towards a wearable interpretation, in metal and stones, of modern nonobjective sculpture. Spratling epitomizes Philip Morton's statement in *Contemporary Jewelry: A Craftsman's Handbook*, "Contemporary jewelers, working in the rational mode (i.e., that which seeks the simplest, most direct, most effective and most economical means) strive to achieve the most direct expression of form arising from simple processes and depend upon the qualities of the materials themselves."[7] Clean, simple line, shape and form, combined with wood, tortoise shell and semiprecious stones, continued to be seen in Spratling's designs until his death on August 7, 1967, in an automobile accident on a Mexican highway. An old friend, Alberto Ulrich, bought Spratling's ranch and silversmithy from the former employees of his workshop, who had inherited the properties.[8] The

business is presently called "Sucesores de William Spratling, S.A." and reportedly is run very much as Don Guillermo himself had done.

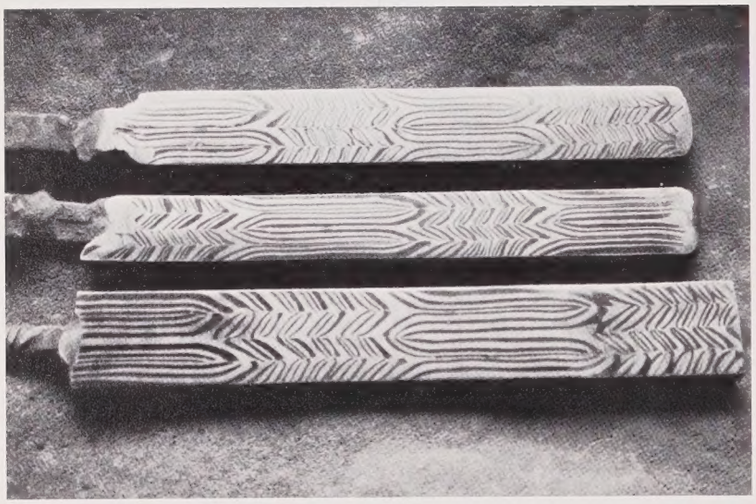
The influence Spratling had on an entire industry and economy remains, as author Bud Schulberg so eloquently remarks, in the introduction to *File on Spratling: An Autobiography*, "From New Orleans he sailed across the Gulf of Mexico to establish himself as the pioneer silversmith of Taxco...a community that had lost touch with its own materials and its own inspiration in the shaping of those materials. It took a southern 'gringo' to reinspire the hearts and minds of the latent Indian artists and artisans of Guerrero."[9]

Acknowledgment
The author wishes to thank Karen Rymer of Milagros Gallery, San Antonio, Texas, for her help and enthusiasm.

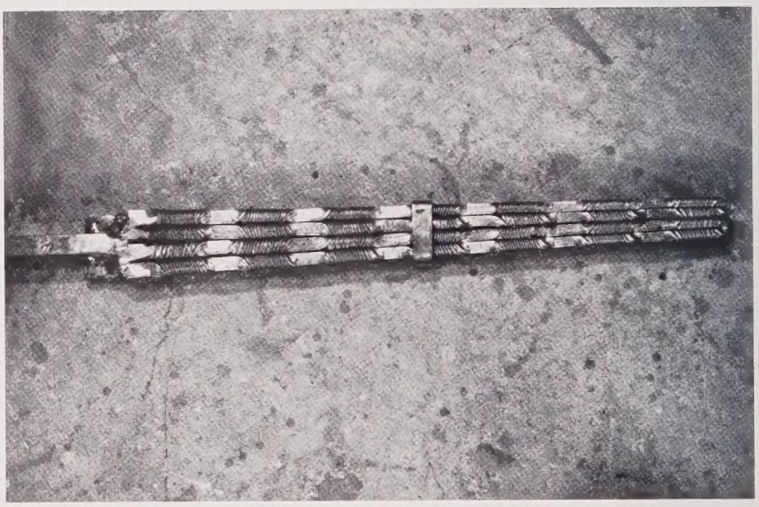
Toni Lesser Wolf is a jewelry historian, lecturer, curator and writer living in New York City.

Notes

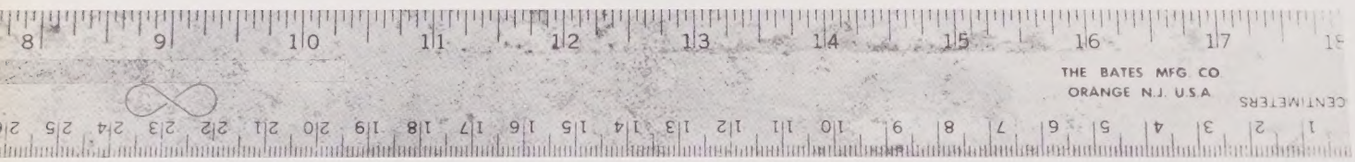
1. Lucia Garcia-Noriega Nieto, "Mexican Silver: William Spratling and the Taxco Style", *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (Fall, 1988), p.44.
2. William Spratling, *File on Spratling: An Autobiography* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co.) 1967, p.70.
3. Ibid., p.70.
4. Tono Castillo, from a conversation with Karen Davidoff in April 1985, published in *Mexican Silver Jewelry: The American School 1930-1960*, a catalog accompanying the exhibition of the same name at Muriel Karasik Gallery, New York, June 5 – July 13, 1985, p.6.
5. Spratling, *op. cit.*, p.72.
6. *Ibid.*, p.79.
7. Philip Morton, *Contemporary Jewelry: Craftsman's Handbook* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York, 1970), p. 34.
8. Nieto, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
9. Spratling, *op. cit.*, p.X.



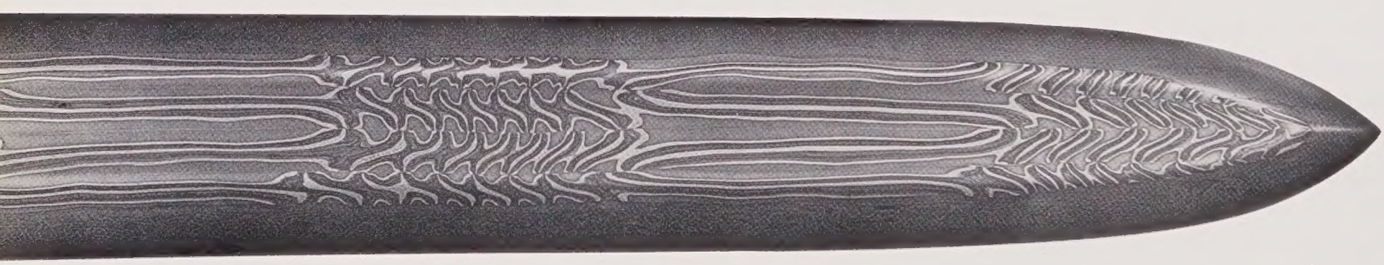
Sample billets



The core bundle of eight twisted rods, ready to be forge-welded



Tip of finished sword. Photo: Weyer of Toledo



A REPLICA OF THE SUTTON HOO SWORD

by Scott Michael Lankton

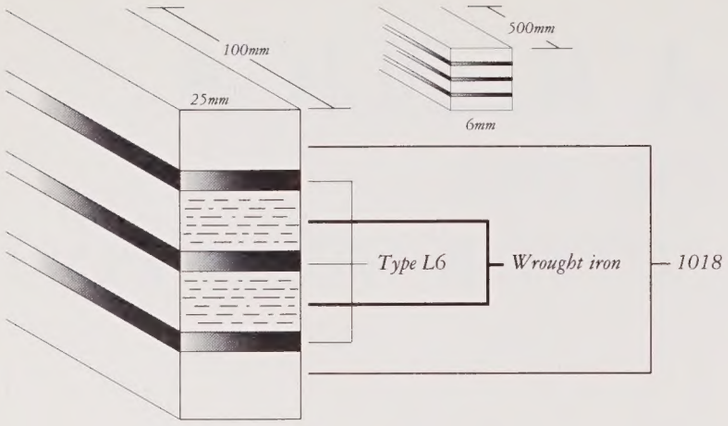
Laminated edge wrapped around welded core

Considered to be one of the richest and most important archaeological finds in Great Britain, the Ship Burial known as Sutton Hoo[1] was found near present-day Woodbridge, in Suffolk, in 1939. Coins from the burial mound date the site no later than 625 A.D. Since the original excavation, ongoing research has been supervised by the British Museum, where the most prominent pieces are now housed.

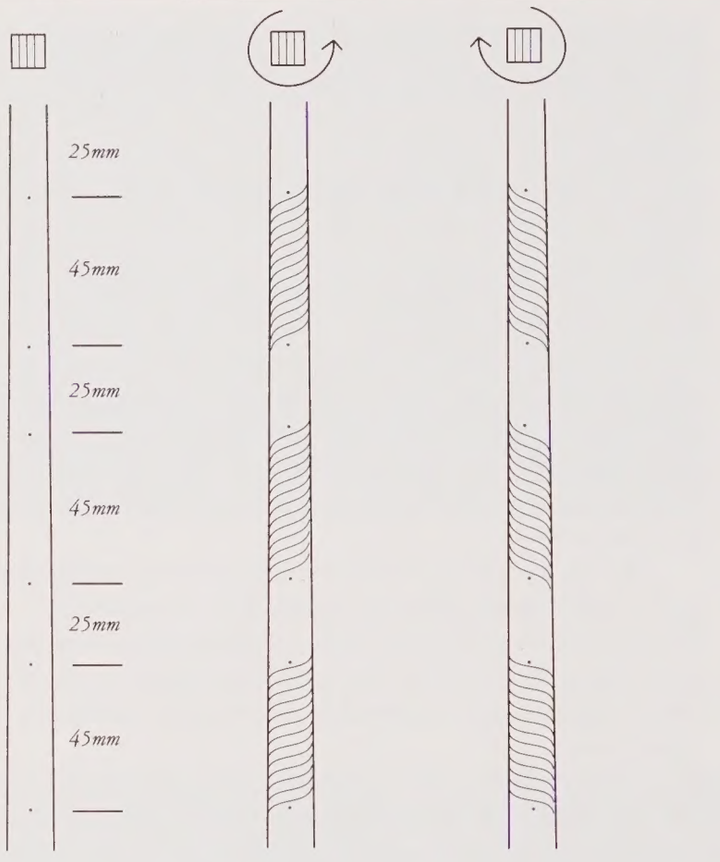
In 1985 a Viking-style sword I had made was seen by Leslie Webster, a scholar from the British Museum. She mentioned that the museum was interested in having the Sutton Hoo sword blade reproduced but had been unable to find anyone (crazy enough) to do the job. Other objects from the tomb had been replicated including the helmet, the harp, the purse and the shield. After nearly four years of correspondence across the Atlantic, the project was ready to begin.

For several months I had been living with the radiographs of the original sword, supplied by Janet Lang at the British Museum Research Laboratory. Slides, enlargements and tracing paper were used to work out the possibilities of pattern. In the end, I found myself mostly in agreement with Angela Care-Evans's interpretation:

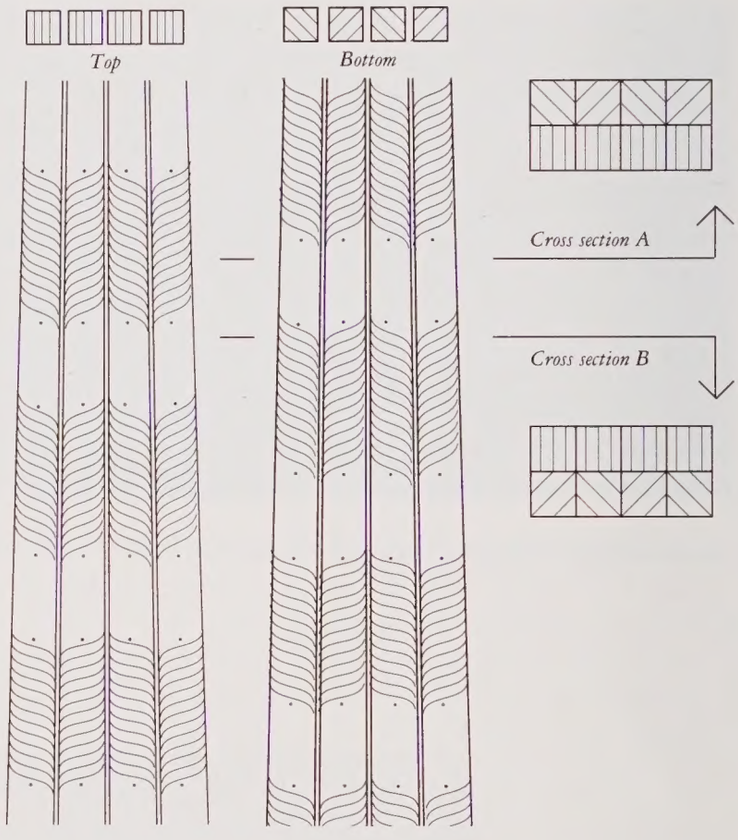
"The condition of the iron sword-blade in the Sutton Hoo burial was indifferent when found....The blade and its scabbard had corroded into one inseparable mass, but radiography has revealed that beneath the corrosion products the iron of the blade has survived sufficiently well in restricted areas for an interpretation of its structure to be possible....The radiographs suggest that it was built up of four bundles of seven rods twist-forged in an alternating pattern and lying back to back with four more bundles of seven rods. The bundles of rods twist alternately to right and left, forming a double band of the characteristic herringbone pattern that is one of the most distinctive features of such blades. The twisted bands alternate with straight bands along the length of the blade.... In broad terms, and remembering that any interpretation of radiographic evidence may be misleading in one way or another, the proportions of the pattern-welded blade appear to be as follows: the average length of both the twisted and straight areas is 5.3 cm, and the pattern repeats at least eleven times....The sword-blade has been sliced in the British Museum Research Laboratory, but the cut section contributed no additional information about the physical composition of the blade, although it confirmed the existence of a skin- or fur-lined scabbard."[2]



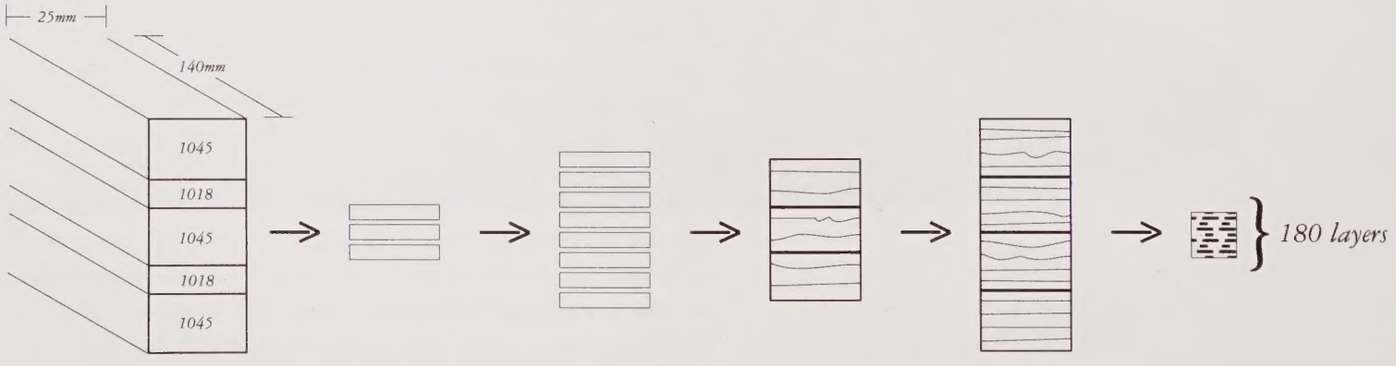
1. *Twisted billets construction*



2. *Core bars showing centerpunched intervals*



3. *Eight bars combined*



4. *2 billets for edge* *5 layers* *15* *45* *2 billets combined*

Cross section final billet

Cross section of final sword

Once the general pattern was determined, it was time to start making samples in order to work out the specifics. The seven layers of each "interrupted twist" bar could be clearly counted in the radiograph. The exact number of revolutions of each twisted section was not quite as clear, but the average was four complete turns. This number turned out to be the maximum amount the bars could take without shearing. When forged to the final form, each twisted and straight section needed to be 5.3 cm long.

A sample cross-section taken at the British Museum Research Laboratory revealed that no metal remained that could be analyzed. The presence of phosphorus was detected, which indicates the use of phosphoric ores. The only iron material available with a significant phosphorus content is wrought iron, and this was chosen as one of the metals. Although many old weapons have been analyzed[3] to determine the materials used and the relative hardnesses achieved, there was no way to know the specifics of the Sutton Hoo sword because of its condition. The severe oxidation did, however, have one positive effect, namely, the fact that iron and steel oxidize at different rates thus producing the clear pattern of the radiographs. The radiographs showed that the edge consisted of a continuous laminate wrapped around the central core. These laminations could not be counted accurately. The steels chosen to make the edge were 1045 (80%) and 1018 (20%). The final edge billet had 180 layers.

For the eight billets used to construct the core, two other steels, 1018 and Type L6, were selected to be combined with the wrought iron. These were chosen for their physical characteristics and for the contrast that they provided when the finished blade was etched.

I never intended to suggest that the materials available in 550 A.D. could be had in 1989 or that this modern sword could look precisely like the original. Instead, the original has provided the inspiration for this modern piece.

The first sample billet was prepared. The seven layers were forge-welded, drawn out, twisted, cut into eight pieces and rewelded into a bundle. This bundle was then drawn out, polished, etched and studied. Several of the samples were radiographed for comparison with the original. I repeated the process seven times, adjusting the variables as I went along and keeping close records. finally, I had a sample that very closely matched radiographs of the original.

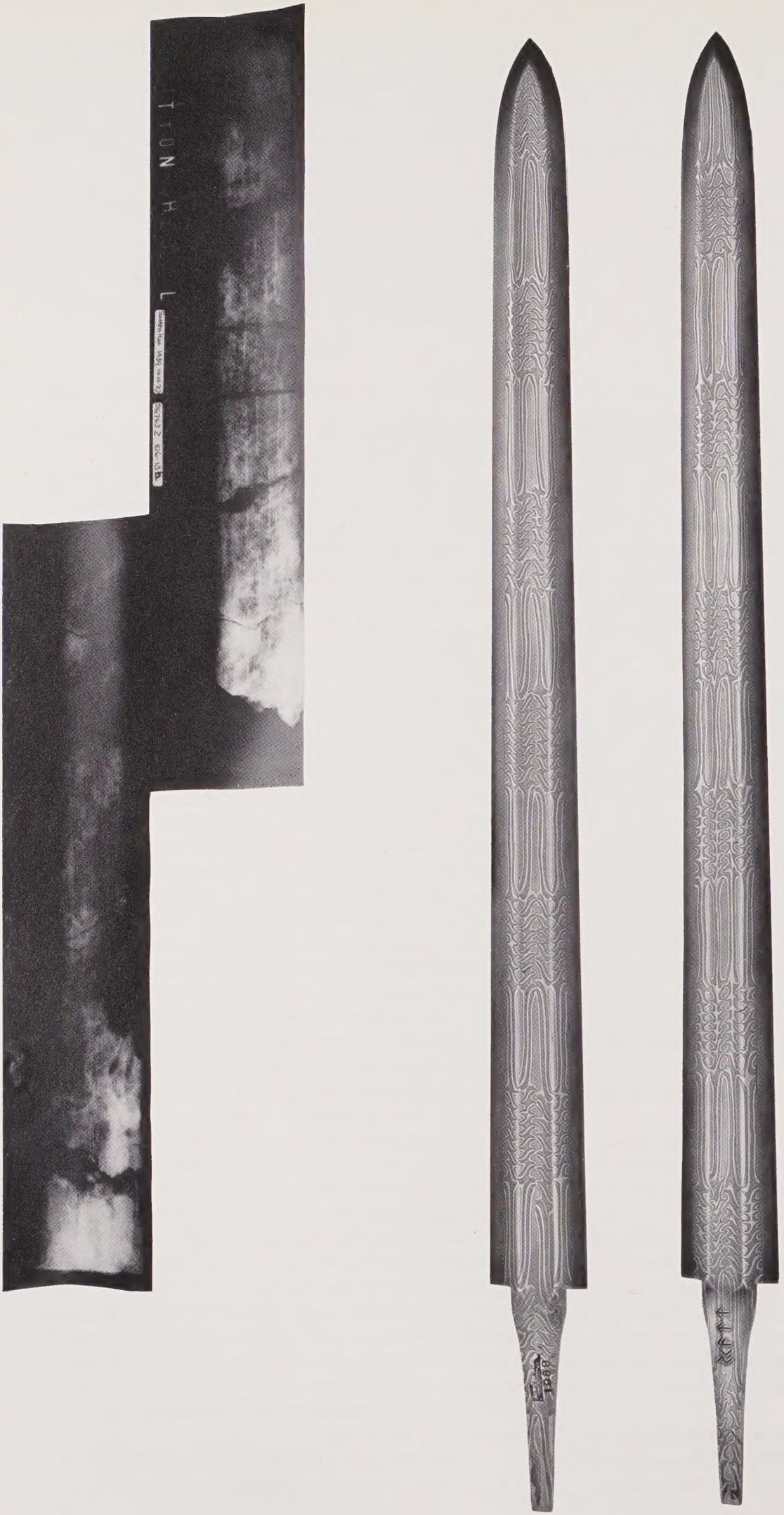
The radiographs primarily show the central plane of the blade where the inner faces of the two sides of the core bundle meet. The original surface pattern of the blade was oxidized completely away, thus revealing that portion of the pattern that was protected within the center of the relic.

To make this type of "interrupted-twist" pattern, I took several things into account. One is that a twisted section of laminate will resist elongation at a substantially different rate than a straight section of the same laminate. Visually, when a person looks at an interrupted twist pattern, the eye tends to count the transition area as a part of the straight section. So, to make the two appear to be the same length, trial and error (lots of the latter) led me to make the twisted sections nearly twice as long as the straight sections. In the finished piece, both were very close to the same length. This was critical if the two-sided, juxtaposed pattern was to line up like the original did.

To begin the sword, 10 billets of the same proportion as the last sample were made. (See *Figure 1).* These were forge-welded and drawn out into slightly tapered square rods, 500mm long, 10mm at the big end and 6mm at the small end. It was critical to avoid forging a parallelogram that would skew the layers and ruin the pattern. The rods were then centerpunched at the intervals shown in *Figure 2.* They were then divided into two groups, one group was twisted clockwise and the other counter-clockwise. The eight best rods were selected and joined as illustrated in *Figure 3* . The tapered rods produced a tapered core bundle. This was important because the pattern would become uneven and distorted, especially near the tip, if the sword's taper was forged later. This bundle was arc-welded together at the ends and a handle was added. It was then slowly heated in a large coal fire, fluxed with borax and returned to the fire. When an even welding heat was drawn, the rods were hammered together and fused.

The core billet was set aside and the billets to form the edge were made as shown in *Figure 4.* This 107cm bar was wrapped around the core billet, which had its tip rounded off. It was held in place temporarily by arc welds near the hilt, which would be removed later. The piece was heated, fluxed, brought up to welding heat and forge-welded. A spring fuller was made to forge the depression down the center of each side simultaneously. As the edges were forged, it became obvious that this sword wasn't going to measure up. It was getting too long to match the proportion of the original and the welding flaws were unacceptable. Even though it was now scrap, the blade was forged out and ground for practice and study. Later it would prove to be valuable as a test piece for heat treating and etching.

The second time I proceeded essentially as before, only with a bit more care. I was determined not to fail again. Ten more



Left: Both sides of the sword, shown with the radiograph. Note the juxtaposition of the interupted twist pattern. Photo: Weyer of Toledo

billets were made as in *Figure 1* and given the same treatment as before. Interestingly enough, the day that this second core was welded into one was March 20, the Vernal Equinox, a day or balance. A collar was used this time to help hold the twisted rods together in the heat.

A new pair of edge billets were made as before (see *Figure 4*). Another collar was used to hold the edge to the core billet. No collars were used on the first sword attempt. This second try proved successful. The piece was worked into a gradually tapered blank. It began to look like a sword at last! The blade was fullered and the edges were forged out. This step alone took seven hours. It was hammered as closely to its final shape as possible. My blade ended up having the same measurements as the original, except at the hilt, where it was 8mm narrower.

After several days of grinding, filing, stoning and sanding up to 120 grit, the sword was ready for the final, critical step of hardening. A test was made on the first sword and I found it hardened nicely in oil. I laid a charcoal fire and slowly heated the thin blade. When the color was just right, the blade was pulled from the fire and plunged into oil. After it was tested for proper hardness with a file, it was tempered in the heated oil for an hour. It took about seven days to polish the sword up to 600 grit for etching. The first two etches in ferric chloride proved unsatisfactory. A test was made on the first blade using nitric acid and the result was much improved. The second blade was polished one last time and immersed in a 30:1 solution of nitric for five minutes.

In May of 1989, the sword was presented to Sir David Wilson, Director of the British Museum. It is now part of their permanent collection, displayed beside the original sword.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Bob and Audrey Engstrom for their help throughout the project, as well as the staff of the British Museum, Dr. Michael Tite, Janet Lanq, Leslie Webster and Angela Care Evans. Many others also provided help, support and advice, which proved invaluable. A special thank you is also in order to all of those who were close to me during this project and helped me see it through to completion.

Scott Michael Lankton is a graduate of the International Teaching Center for Metal Design in Aachen, West Germany and a full-time blacksmith in Ann Arbor, MI.

Notes

1. Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial: A Handbook* (London: British Museum Publications), 1979; *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial, Vol. II, Arms, Armour and Regalia* (London: British Museum Publications), 1978; and Angela Care Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London: British Museum Publications).

2. Ibid., p.307, and Jaap Ypey, *Rekonstruktionsversuch der Schwerklinge von Sutton Hoo , Archäologishches Korrespondenzblatt,* 1983, pp. 495 – 498. Angela Care Evans is a member of the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum and Editor of Volume III of the museum's definitive publication on the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial.

3. Bernhard Salin, "La civilisation Mérogingienne d'aprés les sépultures," *Les text le laboratoire, III: Les techniques*, 1957, p.311, and R. Tylecote and B. Gilmour, *Ferrous Metallography of Tools and Weapons*, BAR, 155, 1986, p. 251.

Benchmark

Benchmark is a continuing series in *Metalsmith* that presents the work of pioneers in the field of metalsmithing and jewelry, both historical figures and those of the recent past. To date, we have explored the work of Christian Schmidt, Betty Cooke and Al Pine. Here, due to a recent comprehensive exhibition at the San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum, we reintroduce to our readers the handwrought copper work of Dirk Van Erp, a leading handcraftsman in the American Arts and Crafts Movement, who opened his copper shop in San Francisco in 1908.

The following text is excerpted from the extensive catalog written by Dorothy Lamoureux that accompanied the exhibition.

Above: Dirk Van Erp Studio, Lamp, *copper and mica, 50.8 cm h., c. 1920. Photo: Dennis Galloway, courtesy: San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum*

Left: Dirk Van Erp Studio, Flower Boat with Handle, *copper, 17.8 cm h., c. 1920. Photo: Dennis Galloway, courtesy: San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum*

Dirk Van Erp

Arts & Crafts Coppersmith

by Dorothy Lamoureux

Dirk Van Erp was an extraordinary craftsman whose skill flourished in America as a direct result of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The appreciation that this period engendered for honest craftsmanship permitted the Old World traditions to survive, traditions that are alive today well into the Post-Industrial Age.

The Studio of Dirk Van Erp had a large and lasting impact on the people of San Francisco and the Bay Area. Dirk perceived his craft as art, and over time as our perspectives have changed we have elevated it to a form of pure art. Dirk passed his mastery, his gift, on to his children, to Harry Dixon, to Charles Johnson and to many others as well.

The objects created are an endowment. Appreciation for them has not diminished, but has in fact grown. The memory has not faded. By the many people who understand their significance, the objects are kept and cherished.

Now, with the increased interest in the American Arts and Crafts Movement, the work from the Dirk Van Erp Studio has found new prominence. As the lives and work of Van Erp craftsmen become better known, interest in and demand for objects made by the Dirk Van Erp Studio continue to expand across the country.

In 1911, objects produced by the Dirk Van Erp workshop were made primarily from 12–gauge copper, which was purchased from various vendors. Some objects were made from brass. Dirk would still occasionally use a brass shell casing for hammering. The objects were made in two ways that are traditional in metalsmithing. An object was either made from a flat piece of metal that was round or square and shaped over a stake of mold or it was made from a flat, rectangular piece of metal that was hammered and shaped, the seam brazed and a disc soldered into the bottom. The edge was either rolled from the piece itself, or a ring was soldered to fit. Sometimes edges were left unfinished; sometimes they were crimped.

The creation of the object itself is something that is only understood by experience and can only be done correctly by a mastercrafter. As the metal is pounded with a "raising" hammer it becomes brittle and must be heated or annealed and then cooled to make it easier to hammer and shape. The heat opens the molecules of the metal so that it is more malleable. Dirk would sometimes only work a piece through the shaping. He seemed to take a great deal of pride in the beauty of the copper at this stage, in the rough texture of the surface which has come to be called "warty" and he would then complete the piece with a patina which is primarily red, but yellow and dark browns often mingle with the finish. Interestingly, Dirk favored this particular patina but he did not teach his apprentices or his children the secret.[1] People have tried everything from brick dust to chalk to various chemicals to replicate the effect, but without consistent success.

After a piece was raised, or hammered to shape, it was polished and then it was planished with a finishing hammer that was flat or slightly curved to give the surface the hammer marks associated with hand-hammered copper. The size of the hammer used determined the fineness of the finish. A piece could be worked and buffed until it was entirely smooth, but this was not the effect that was desired at the time. People wanted objects that looked handmade. The article was then cleaned by dipping it into a solution of acid. The final step was to apply the patina which was done with a variety of chemicals and processes depending on the color desired.[2]

The lamps were the pride of the studio and took intense labor to make. The labor was shared, one crafter making the base and another making the shade. Isenglass or mica for the shades was purchased in sheets. While India was one of the primary sources for mica, it was also found and mined in other areas including the eastern part of the United States. Mica in its natural state is clear, but in processing shellac and alkyds were used to make the sheets more durable. This changed the color of the mica to shades of light yellow to dark brown and orange. The sheets of mica were cut to size and then heated and shaped to fit the inset of the lamp panels.

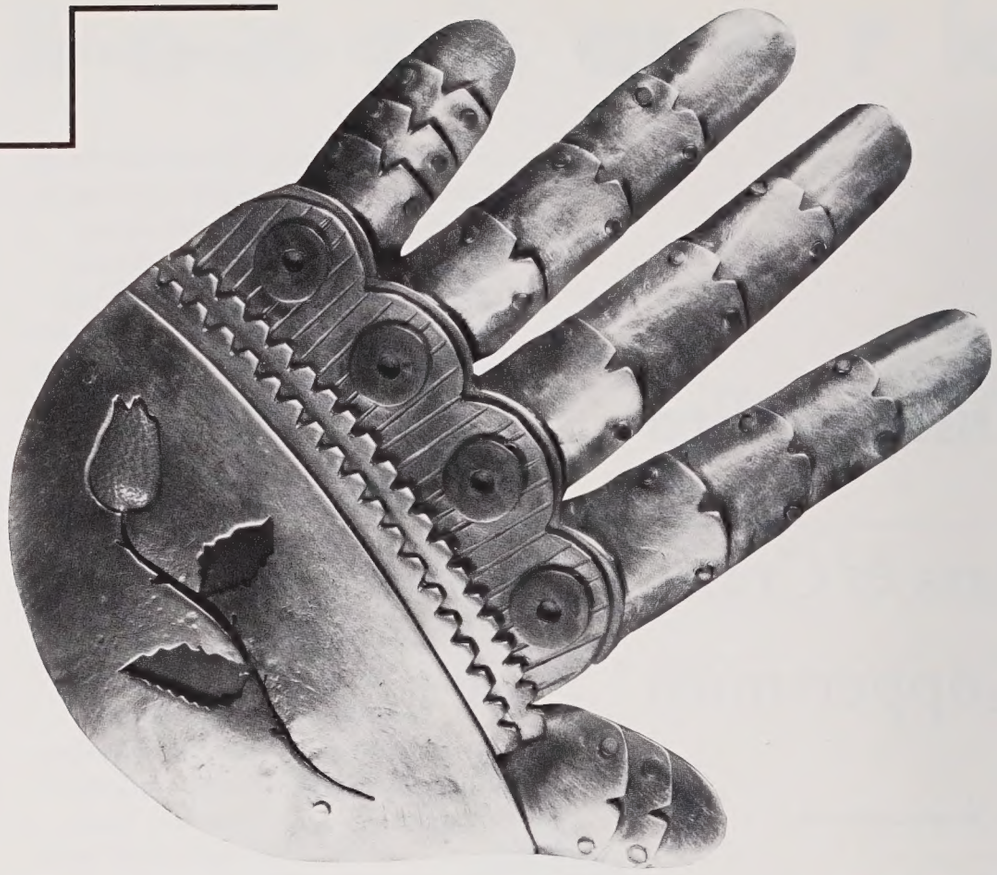
Earlier lamps made before 1916 are distinctly different from lamps that were made later, and this was most apparent in the shades. The method used to attach the straps to the cap and rim was by riveting them on the outside. In earlier lamps, the rim was cut from one piece of copper. In later lamps the straps were attached on the underside of the cap and sometimes on the underside of the rim. This may have been a cost saving device or it may be simply a design change that seemed more desirable. Sometimes lamp shades have stencil patterns, usually Oriental in design, laid between two layers of mica for an interesting effect. Piercing and cutwork in the metal was also occasionally done on the shades.

Dorothy Lamoureux is a social historian who guest curated the Dirk Van Erp exhibition and has had a special interest in the Arts and Crafts Movement for many years.

The 64–page catalog, *The Arts & Crafts Studio of Dirk Van Erp*, is available from the Craft & Folk Art Museum, Landmark Building A, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123–1382 for $15 plus $2 postage (CA residents add 98¢ tax).

Notes

1. This is commonly known, but the statement was made in a March 1989 interview with Mr. Warren D. Mohr, a friend of William Van Erp. Mr. Mohr's father sold the Dirk Van Erp Studio chemicals and corrosives used for finishes and patinas.
2. Technical information is based on instructional interviews (Feb. 15 and March 15, 1989) with artist and master metalsmith Harriete Estel Berman, whom I wish to thank for her time and patience.



Don Quixote from "Hands of the Heros" series, sterling silver, copper, leather

Kiff Slemmons: Hands of the Heroes

CDK Gallery, New York
June 6 – July, 1989

by Antonia Schwed

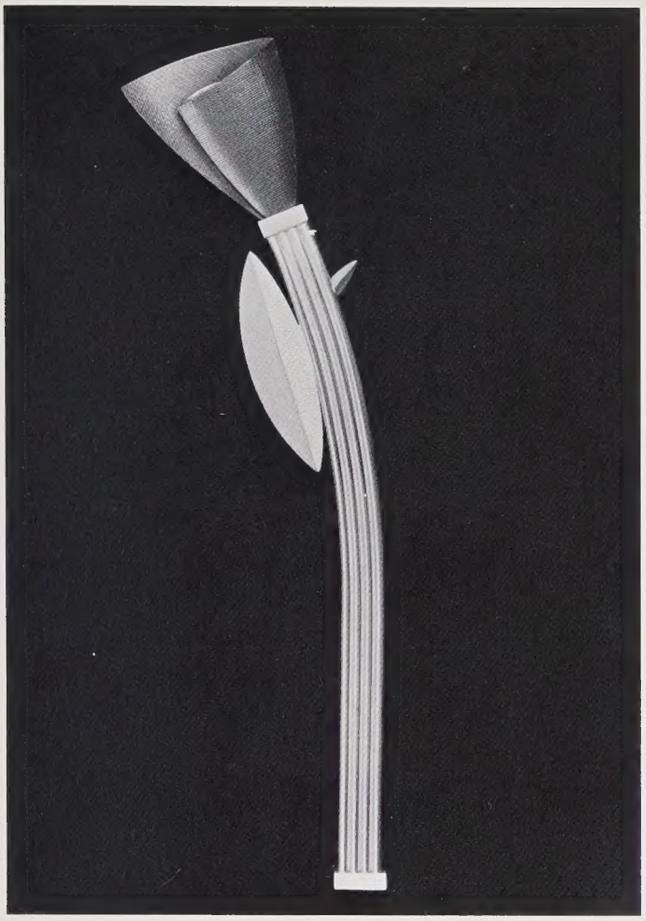
Glancing at this array of flat hands, mostly in a size range of 3¼" x 2½", I was taken aback by the apparent similarity of the pieces. A closer study shows, however, that there is really a great deal of imaginative variety in the decoration and execution of each hand. In any series — and a series certainly seems to be a good way to get a point across — repetition is obviously a danger. In Slemmons's cases, the basic shape for each pin is a palm-up hand, neither realistic nor surreal but somewhere in-between — perhaps stylized is the most descriptive word. But Slemmons has given herself a good springboard for creativity by having each hand named for somebody famous, such as Houdini, Don Quixote, Emily Dickinson, Martin Luther King, Jacques Cousteau, Madame Curie, Osip Mandelstam, Marcel Proust.

The basic material used is silver, but there is clever use of other media — for example, the Martin Luther King is made of ebony and mastodon ivory. Slemmons also enriches her work with subtle amounts of aluminum, plexiglass, formica, slate and brass, as well as various found objects. For instance, the Carl Jung hand is carved with mysterious engravings and has a little stone pre-Columbian figure embedded in it. The Cousteau hand as an extremely small collage consisting of tiny shells, a silver octopus and a minute Coca Cola bottle; the overall surface of the hand is engraved with sea forms. In the Don Quixote hand, in addition to the leather and copper adornment, the fingers are armour-plated and articulated. There is a tiny, enameled watch-face, among other symbols, in the Emily Dickinson hand (Slemmons uses enameled watch faces in two other hands); there are minute architectural symbols for Frank Lloyd Wright and a pattern of dancers' feet across the Fred Astaire hand.

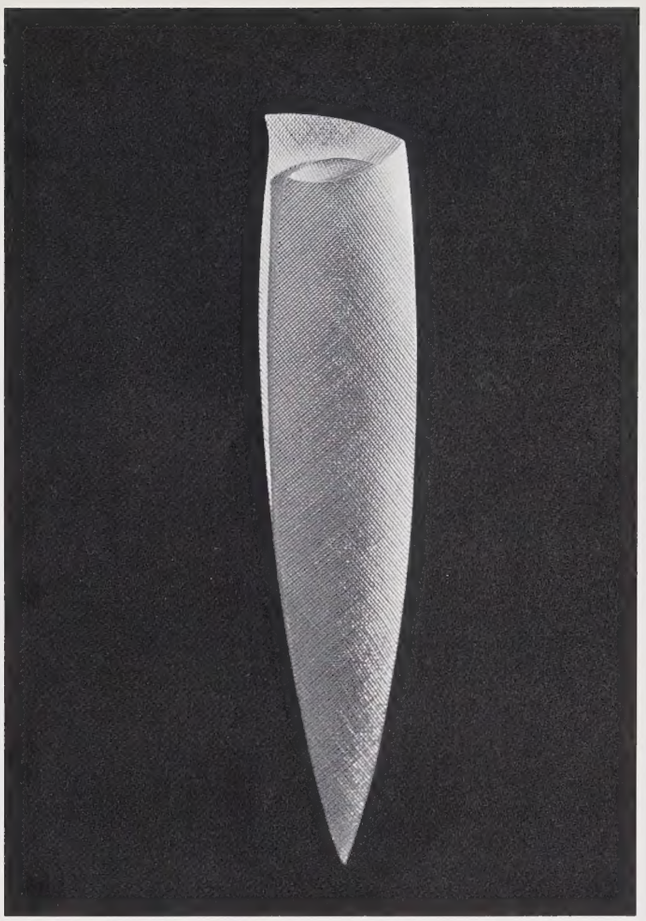
In fact, the exhibit made me think a bit about the significance of the human hand in general: the raised right hand of Buddha, the hand of Fatima, the reaching hands in Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam," Durer's Praying Hands, to say nothing of holding hands, shaking hands, waving goodbye hands, saluting hands, beckoning hands and so on!

Slemmons's work is highly skillful and beautifully done, and, considering the rather confining framework of the series, it is surprisingly interesting. With her symbolic embellishments of the hands, Slemmons gives an intriguing interpretation of each personality.

Antonia Schwed is an enamelist living in New York.



Northern Garden 4 brooch, sterling silver, 7 x 1½ x ¼"



Equinox 6 (More Drawings of Roses), sterling silver, 4½ x 1 x ¼"

Kate Wagle: More Drawings of Roses

Faith Nightengale Gallery, San Diego, CA
April 14 – June 4, 1989

by Carolyn Novin

Roman de la Rose, a 13th-century bestseller, featured a quest for the ideal lady. So, too, the centerpiece of Kate Wagle's show was *Tea Rose*, a delightful, small bud-and leaf sculpture of sterling silver cones spirals and sheet. The show's brooches were also derived from a rose, isolated, rotated fragments that further enhanced the theme of the flower's loaded symbolism.

For example, *Northern Garden #4* joined a "fabric–ated" sterling silver flower to a columnar stem, thereby contrasting an organic object with an architectural construction, a wary dichotomy echoed in the barbed stems of *Thorns #1 and #2*. One may get a thorn prick when one romances the rose.

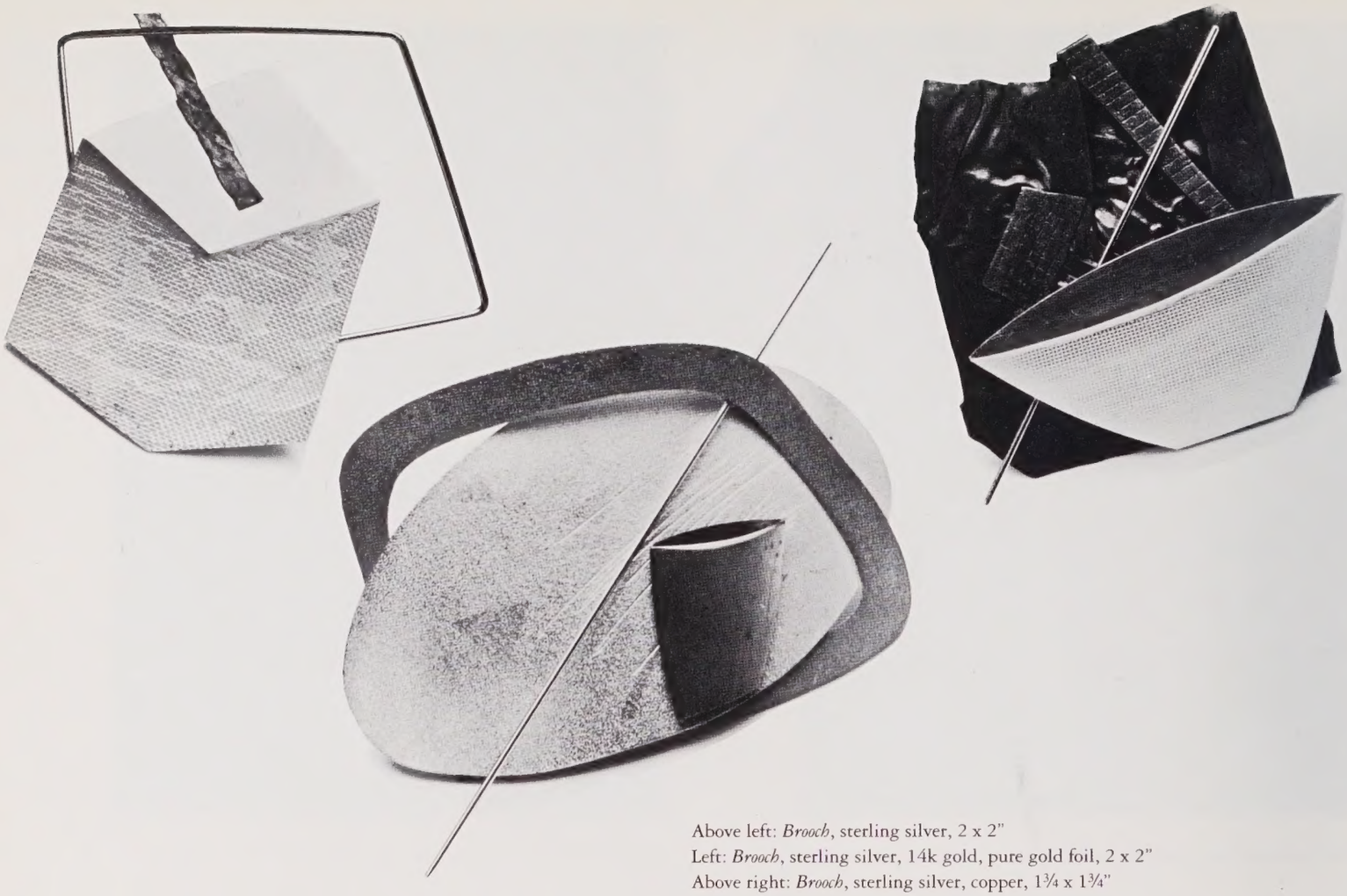
Wagle has often used floral imagery to depict opposites; her *1985 Bridal Bouquet #2,* a bundle of nervous energy, suggested ambivalent nuptials, while *Edged Corsage* and *The Whitest Corsage*, 1986, dealt more with sexual tension, as bladelike leaf pierced circular flower.

In this show, the rosebud had been refined to unite triangle, coil and flange. It was realistic enough to evoke the romantic and ceremonial associations of roses, abstract enough to look contemporary and large enough to be dramatic. While keeping the outline simple and the craftsmanship refined, Wagle successfully varied interior proportions and surface detail to unveil multiple ideas about artificiality.

Equinox 6, in its burnished brilliance and brash shape, counterposed natural to artificial and soft to hard, as it replicated a living thing in textured sterling silver to look like a woven fabric. In contrast, the scalloped edge and oxidation shading on *Equinox 2* created the illusion of plushness, more volume than its design actually contained. Chemical patination, in large-to-fine-grain splatters, made other *Equinox* buds look sundappled, mottled with decay or gemlike, in vivid blue, green, brown and violet. These were highlighted by copper edges.

In Straus's opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, Octavian's presentation of a silver rose to Sophie precipitated a realignment of lovers that dramatically exposed human reactions to love, rejection, youth and aging. Similarly, Kate Wagle's jewelry provoked a fresh look at the flower's ability to consummate relationships.

Carolyn Novin is a metalsmith and writer living in Los Angeles.



Above left: *Brooch*, sterling silver, 2 x 2"
Left: *Brooch*, sterling silver, 14k gold, pure gold foil, 2 x 2"
Above right: *Brooch*, sterling silver, copper, 1¾ x 1¾"

Seung Hee Kim

Plum Gallery, Kinsington, MD

by Gretchen Raber

Seung Hee Kim's simple, abstract forms combine the geometry of household objects and linear patterns of reeds. The best of the work, brooch tableaux, inject a cultural spiritualism by enshrining miniaturized and abstracted mixing bowls. In a purely visceral sense, they are marvelously amusing as quick, dynamic studies or interpretations of drawings. There is an assured draftsmanship in the power of line, both as intaglio and as wire. The flattened and foreshortened vessels are bas-relief volumes, emerging from framed space. They break the frontal plane as a cubist painter might visually punch out perspective. The ubiquitous linear brass sticks are used as balancing agents to add dynamic direction.

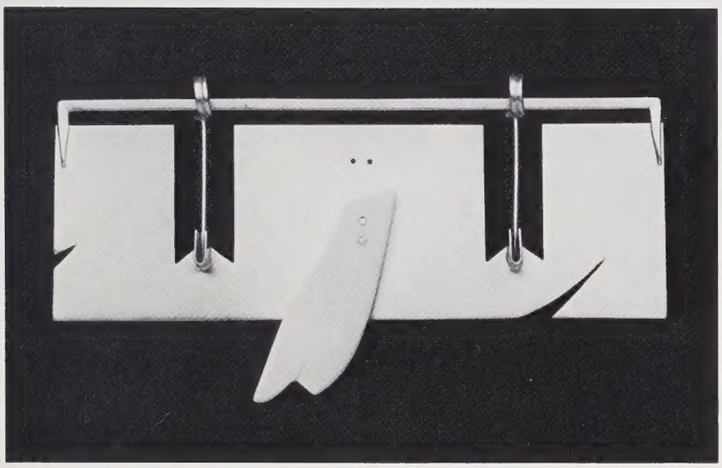
Unfortunately, this work was technically inconsistent with the tightly controlled forms, having glued parts that oozed at the edges. It carried over into the esthetic when several pieces had unintegrated and visually disruptive commercial findings, which detracted from the designed part of the jewelry. This was all the more jarring because it contradicted the visual serenity and balance of the exhibit.

Kim is, nevertheless, a master of the metal surface. The trompe-l'oeil surfaces are pleasantly seductive because they transform the rigid metal to a more weightless and paperlike quality. Whether patina is used to color and soften or printing to animate, the metal is constantly metamorphosed.

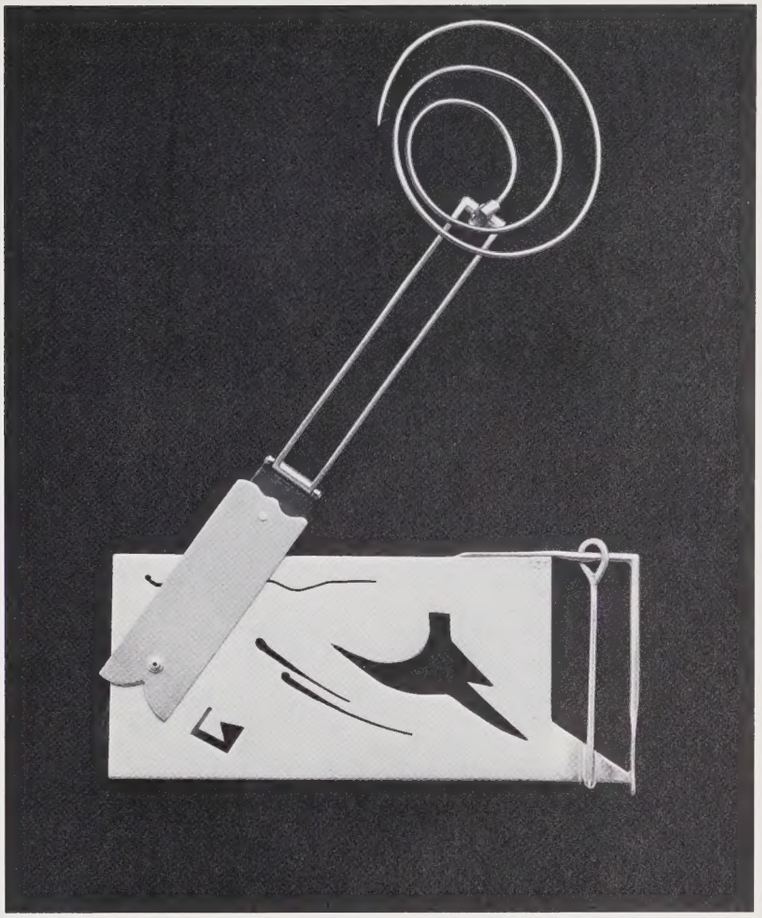
Rae Kyung Park from the National Museum of Modern Art in Seoul, Korea, describes Kim's work as presenting characteristics "of the material itself in its relatively unadulterated state and in doing so heightens the effects of surface texture and patination of the work.

Seung Hee Kim's approach to her work is concurrent with the tendency in comtemporary art for the search for the origin of the physical properties of the material...(T)he numerous techniques accumulated over the years have been applied to create her poetic expressions of sensitivity through metals..."

Gretchen Raber is a goldsmith living in Alexandria, VA.



Brooch, silver, ivory, 4¼ x 1½", 1988. Photo: George Erml, courtesy: Helen Drutt Gallery



Brooch, silver, nickel, steel, 1988. Photo: George Erml, courtesy: Helen Drutt Gallery

Deganit Schocken

Helen Drutt Gallery, New York
May 4 – 27, 1989

by Eva Eisler

Deganit Schocken's work is strongly influenced by her architectural background. She lives in Israel, surrounded by a multitude of architectural styles, from the most ancient to the most modern. Consequently, it is not surprising that Schocken expresses structure and space in her work. Movement in an environment is her underlying theme. The jewelry, whose structure requires skillful, highly inventive and intelligent engineering, appears to be studies for larger sculptures or for some kind of constantly changing set design. The body is seen as the site or vehicle for these studies.

Schocken's brooches have a three-dimensional frame of linear and/or curved elements surrounding a symbol-filled "interior," which derives its forms both from nature and from man-made environments, i.e., tree, bird or house symbols. These abstract symbols are given further layers of meaning by their frequent representation as negative cutouts that reappear as positive images elsewhere. The assemblies are connected directly to the outer frame by hinges, although, in some cases, a secondary interior structure that extends to and through the external frame is used.

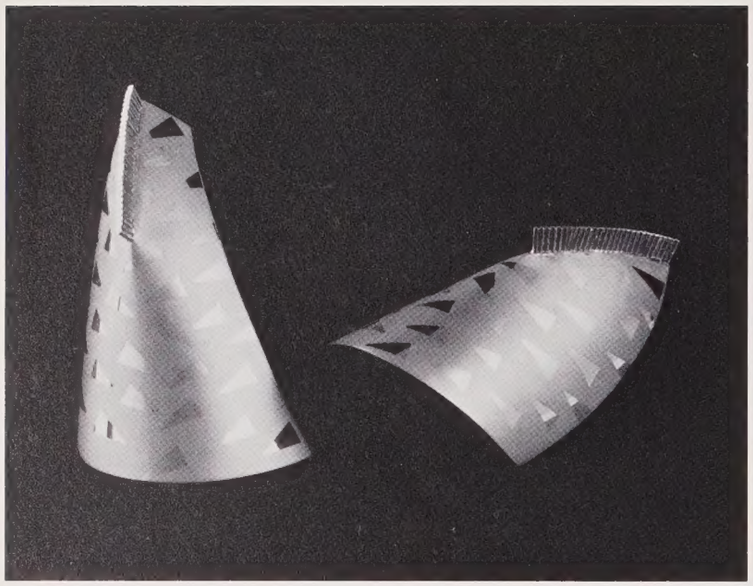
Schocken has perfected a number of ingenious mechanical devices that permit the movement of individual parts in harmony with the movement of the body. These details also make it possible for the pieces to be reassembled or transformed.

The pins and spirals used for fastening the piece of jewelry to a fabric are an integral part of the design. Apart from traditional materials, gold and silver, Schocken incorporates abstract elements made from ivory, wood, porcelain or stone. These pieces, tooled with a jeweler's precision, give a certain mass to her otherwise transparent, almost graphic brooches.

The necklaces can also be adjusted or modified. The precise, silver chains function mechanically, like mountain climbing ropes, where the pulleys assume an abstract symbolic role. Necklaces can be worn across the body and extended to the back, held in position by spirals turned into the fabric.

Although the physical scale of Schocken's work is coordinated with human proportions, it projects a larger concept of architectural influence.

Eva Eisler is an artist living in New York, who works in contemporary jewelry and sculpture.



Susan Fortune, *Zebra Series #2*, earrings, sterling silver, fabricated, polished and sandblasted, each 2⅝ x 1"

Patricia Woods, *Waterfall*, raised copper bowl with silver, etched with purple luster patination, 10"d.

Susan Fortune, Patricia Woods

Appalachian Center for the Crafts, Smithville, TN
March, 1989

by Klaus Kallenberger

Susan Fortune, originally from Aberdeen, Scotland, is now teaching design and visual studies at the Appalachian Center for the Crafts. Her training was completed in 1973 at the City of London Polytechnic with a major in jewelry. Her work is characterized by a consistently strong sense of design and the thorough craftsmanship one expects of a master goldsmith. Sterling necklaces, earrings and pins are enriched with details in copper and etched or chased surfaces. In many pieces, feathers and hinge mechanisms are well integrated. The pins all have individually designed and hand-fabricated pinback sets, and earrings have fabricated backs. Each piece would be easily wearable and well suited for many occasions, but the earrings are large and would require a strong earlobe. The visual vocabulary shows a soft technological imagery, cleanly crafted with much attention to detail. The reverse sides are as well finished as the fronts of each piece.

Patricia Woods, presently on a Fulbright teaching exchange replacing Bob Coogan, the jewelry master at the Craft Center, is also from Britain. Her degree is from Loughborough College of Art and Design in metalsmithing. She teaches metals at South Devon College of Art, England. Her work is in marked contrast to Fortune's in that it reflects a preoccupation with color, the mysterious and the ceremonial. Several vessel forms raised in copper are patinated. One is ornamented with brightly lacquered, woven-copper wire. She also displays a variety of jewelry such as bola tie, a massive decorative belt, crocheted copper-wire bracelets, earrings, pins and a necklace. Attention to traditional craftsmanship is replaced with a rustic, more immediate approach to object completion. Color, texture, shape and spirit are the primary concerns of this goldsmith.

Klaus Kallenberger is a professor of art at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.

Tigress Odalisque, grisalle enamel, sterling silver, 22k gold, fire agate, garnet, peridot, diamonds, peral, 5 x 3 x ½". Photo: John de Groot, courtesy: Susan Cummins Gallery

Daddy Was a Snake Charmer, grisalle enamel, sterling silver, 18 and 22k gold, moonstone, boulder opals, sapphire, topaz crystal, 3½ x 2½ x ¾". Photo: John de Groot, courtesy: Susan Cummins Gallery

D.X. Ross: Jewelry

Susan Cummins Gallery, Mill Valley, CA
August 1-19, 1989

by Roberta Floden

Because D.X. Ross combines the age-old art of enameling with traditional materials such as gold and a lavish use of precious and semiprecious stones on a base of engraved and patinaed silver, her jewelry has a historical or, more precisely, a medieval look. Ross's pendants and brooches, even her earrings and rings, are informed with layers of meaning that give presence and power to the pieces. This power comes primarily from the fascinating narrative scenes Ross creates in enamel, using the technique of grisaille, which begins with black enamel onto which white and lighter hues are applied. This exacting, repetitious process affords a translucent quality not found in traditional enamelwork and a dark modeling that highlights the images, giving the illusion of sculptural relief.

Placed in the center of these enameled shapes are metaphorical, figurative scenes, which animate and provide focus for her jewelry. The imagery serves to invite the viewer to respond not only to its formal characteristics but also to its content. The scenes have a significance beyond what is visible. The symbols appeal directly to the imagination. You enter irresistibly into the work and into their complex mythology.

In *Tigress Odalisque*, there is an ironic mutation of what looks like a Manet nude into a literal man-eater. Yet, the tigress is ever so beguiling, surrounded by gold, agate, garnet, peridot, diamonds and a pearl.

Daddy Was a Snake Charmer has East-Indian myths overlaid with psychological implications, providing layer-upon-layer of meaning with a fascinating jeweled and engraved framework. The delicate outlines of the images provided by the grisaille technique highlight the bulbous, phallic elements, offset by the rounded, feminine stones.

Although some of the pieces have an unrefined appearance, this works to emphasize their medieval character. Indeed, each piece is technically complex, very controlled and carefully executed, like thoughtful miniature sculptures. Nothing is left to chance. For example, Ross's chains are production made; but, she patinas them, adding stones, wraps and holders. Closing devices are often main decorative features. The backs are engraved, often bejeweled, and continue the imagery on the front. This all demands careful and intimate viewing. Her newest work consists of earrings, which, though more conventional in look and without enamelwork, makes use of unconventional uncut stones. By using the color and texture of the stones with engraved metalwork, she is able to fuse disparate elements into a jewelry both unifying and harmonious.

Roberta Floden is a Marin County, CA, art and theater critic.

Letters *continued from page 6*

He says, "the . . . arts reach us at a pre–language level . . ."; I say they go out the same way. Why should it be different?

To master a terminology confers upon the dilettante an illusion of competence. This is why critics, curators, collectors and perusers of catalogs feel competent to dole out advice to artists. Here's news: artists are just like people. You can't tell them anything. They come in all stripes: some of the greatest artists have taken their own counsel and stuck to familiar ground. I'm not sure, but I seem to remember . . . there were artists before Jackson Pollock. And what's wrong with letting history be the judge? The process has a better track record than the abominable attempts of critics to alter history.

Tim is right. We all must pass on our wisdom (that's not an anvil; that's your finger!). And Joseph Campbell, for all that we owe him, has got the cart before the horse on this point. For what better way to experience the unthinkable than to dream it? Did humans dream of flying before they could say "fuselage"? I think so.

Falk Burger
New York City

Dear Editor:

The cover of the Fall 1989 issue of *Metalsmith* was colorful, but what does it have to do with metalsmithing? As time goes by, I see our magazine reflecting changes of the times with plastics integrated into jewelry, colored aluminum and titanium used profusely, etc., but when metal becomes completely obscured and is not even included for structural purposes, I am depressed. I have worked with many different metals over the years and have learned to appreciate the variety and complexity of these materials and am concerned that there are fewer and fewer schools teaching the disciplines of metalwork. It is hard work and I can see it becoming a lost art, but I hope not. Perhaps that is why the Society of American Silversmiths has recently come into being. When I first joined the Society of North American Goldsmiths it included all kinds of metalwork as well as fine gold jewelry but obviously it has lost this priority. Why retain the name *Metalsmith?*

Kay White Quinn
Mountain View, CA

Dear Editor:

I love the Arch Connelly piece on the cover of the fall issue!

Jonathan Bonner
Providence, RI

Dear Editor:

Thanks to the designers of the new *Metalsmith* and to the Board of SNAG for giving us such a beautiful magazine. I think the new format creates an elegant background for its contents.

Mark Hickman
Sante Fe, NM

Dear Editor:

The magazine keeps getting better and better. I love the cover stock, the layout, graphics and, of course, the content. We read articles from *Metalsmith* regularly as part of the grad and B.F.A. seminar. Thanks for making my job easier.

Randy Long
Bloomington, IN

Correction: In the "Focus" article on Dan Feldman in the Summer issue of *Metalsmith*, a footnote was inadvertently omitted. The footnote should have come after the sentence on line 13, which reads: "Within the visual arts, however, allegorical meaning is deciphered by reading one text through another, however fragmentary, intermittent or chaotic their relationship may be." The note should have read: Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmoderism," reprinted in "Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation" in *October*, Spring 1980, n.12, 67–86 and Summer 1980, n.13, 59–80.

With deep regret we report the death of Michael Scott
in Seattle on September 21, 1989 at the age of 65.
His valuable contribution to the crafts field as journalist,
founder/editor of *The Crafts Report* and author of *The Crafts Business Encyclopedia*,
as well as his boundless energy and activism
in aspiring to create a global crafts community, will long be remembered.

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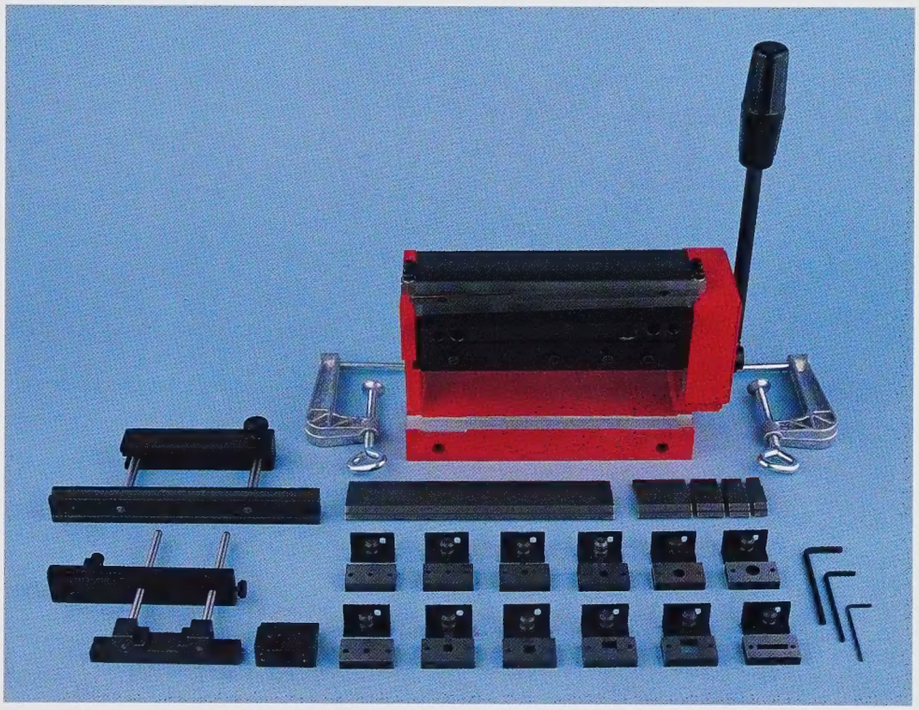

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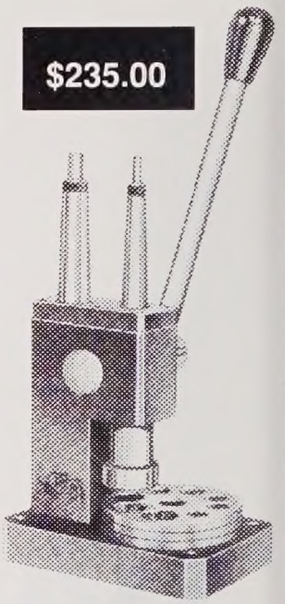

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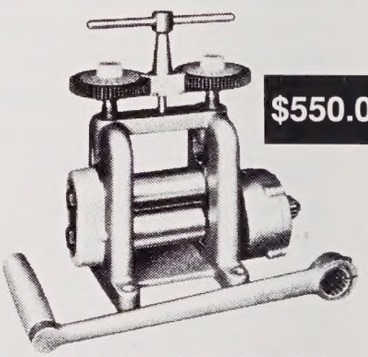

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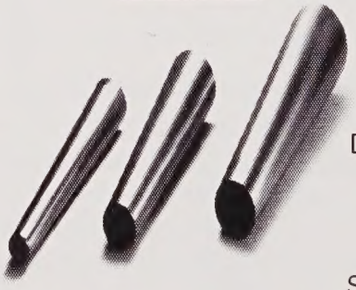

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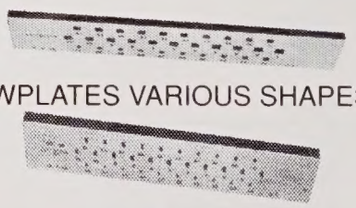

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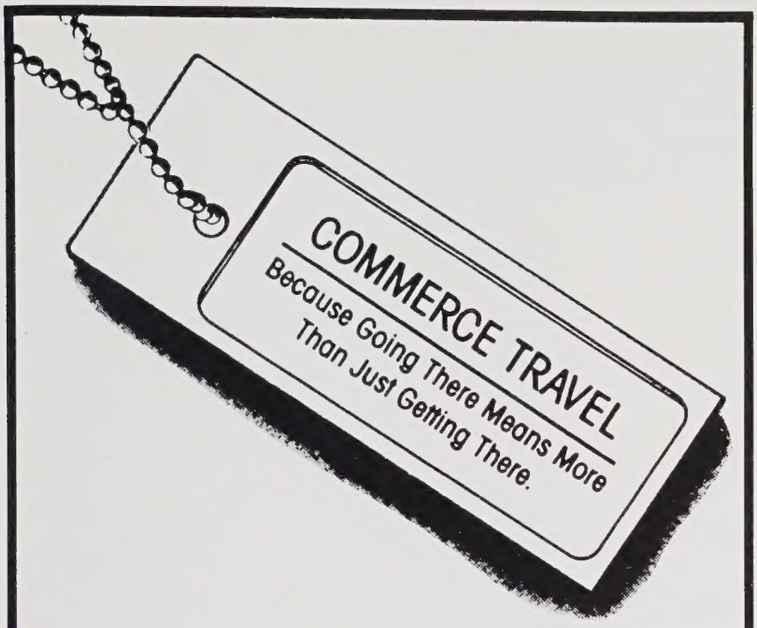

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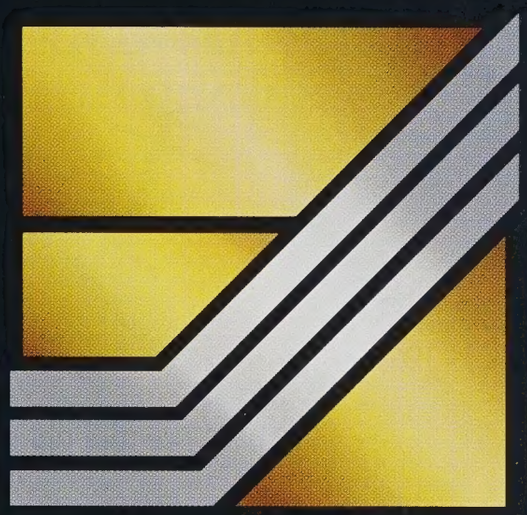

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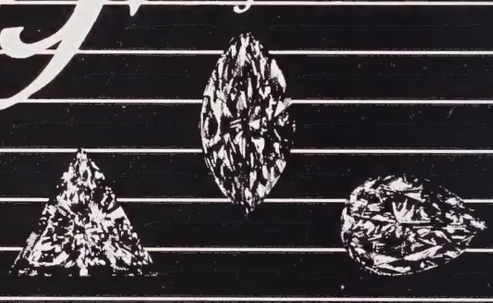
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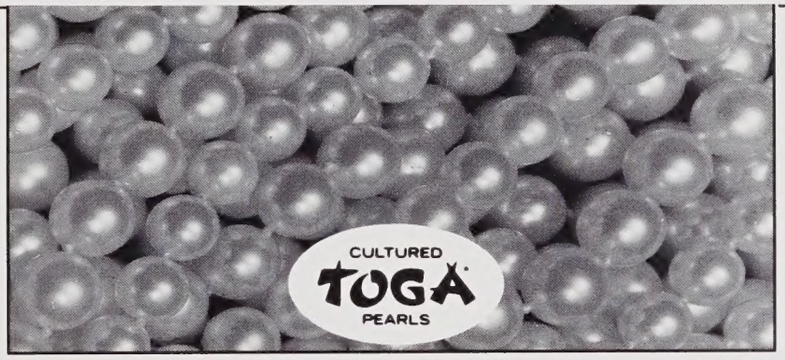

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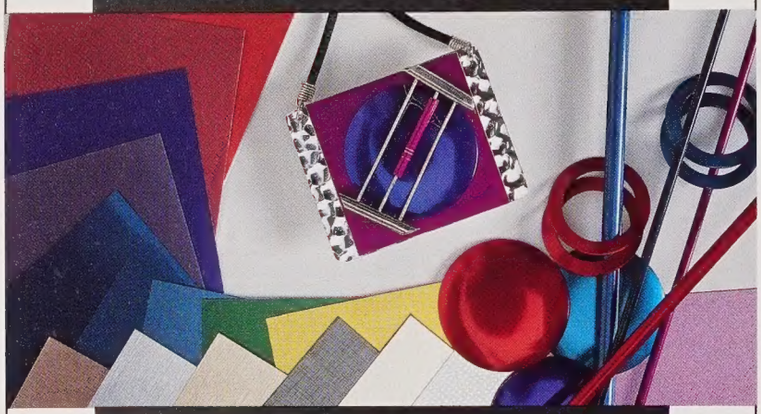

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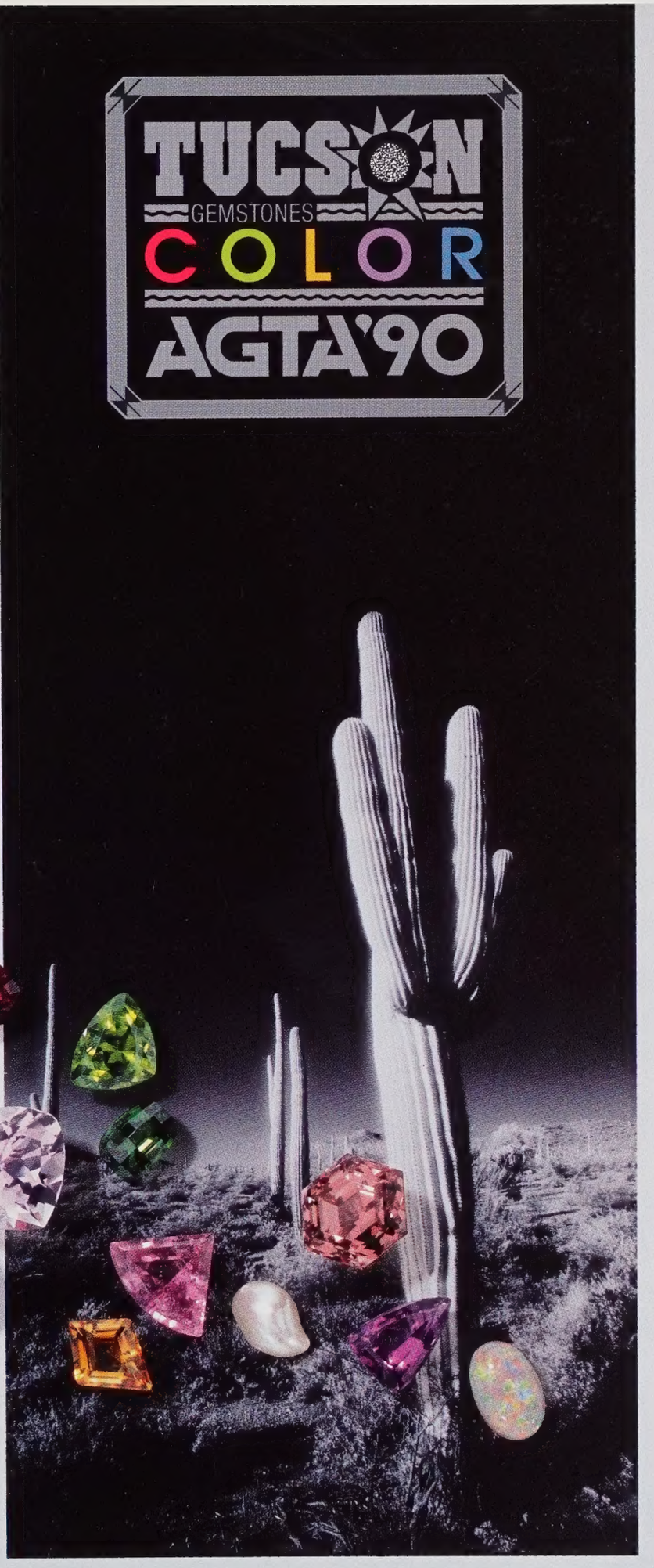

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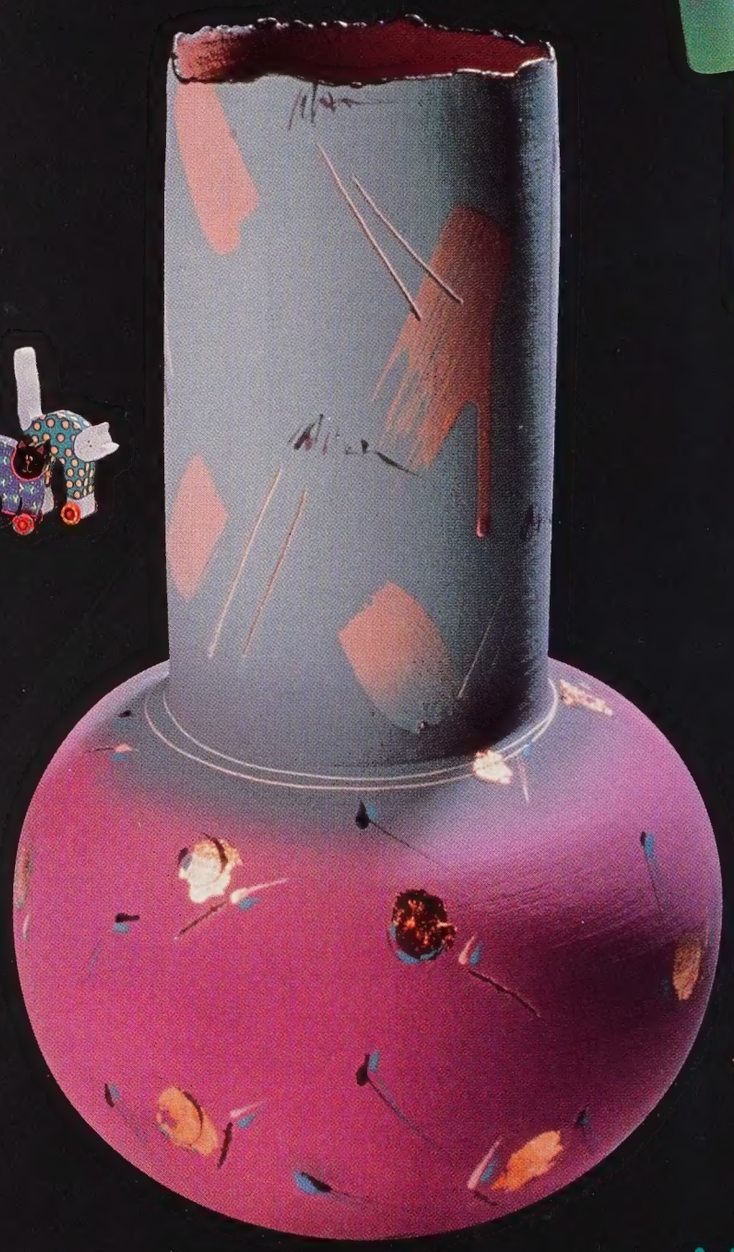

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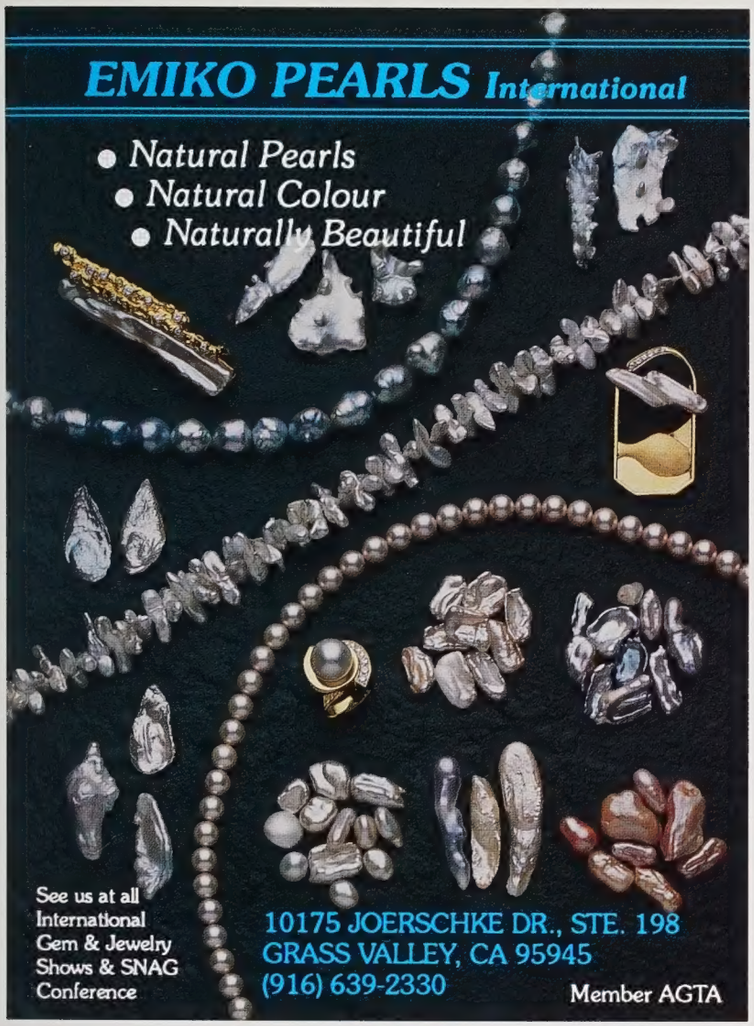
Artwork shown (clockwise from top right): Amy Spencer, Ben Dyer, Barbara Fletcher, Sandy Hastings, Dona Dalton, (center) Laura Ross.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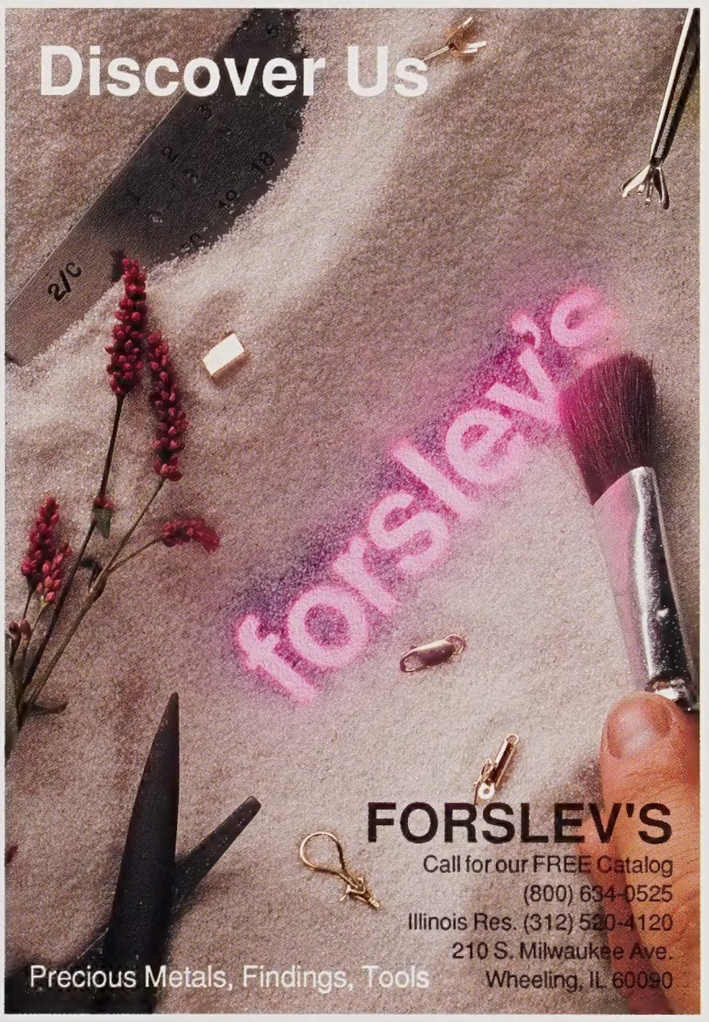

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The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary gold- and silversmithing. SNAG serves as a forum for the free exchange of ideas in the field.

Technical information, esthetic and educational issues, and other topics of interest to the practioner and teacher of contemporary metalwork are disseminated by SNAG publications and conferences. Professionals and students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts will all find SNAG interesting and useful. From pure sculpture to production jewelry. SNAG offers information on the entire range of the exciting field of metalsmithing.

SERVICES

Each year, SNAG conducts a conference that attracts jewelers and silversmiths from all over the world. Major figures in the field speak on a multitude of topics. Each conference is held in a different location to allow the widest audience possible access to these lively and stimulating gatherings.

Periodically, SNAG sponsors major exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. In the past, SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and the Phoenix Museum of Art. A special exhibition of work by Distinguished Members traveled to major museums in Europe in 1979.

The Society operates a book ordering service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

SNAG also operates a slide library and rental service, which contains the portfolios of Distinguished Members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent or purchase slices at minimal cost.

PUBLICATIONS

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Prominent jewelers and designers, silversmiths, blacksmiths and sculptors are featured in full-length articles. Process and technique are explored in essays on design and production, materials and equipment. Regular columns by leading authorities discuss the latest gallery shows, newest books and current museum exhibitions.

The *SNAG Newsletter* is published bimonthly and is available to members only. It features timely information on exhibitions, workshops, conferences and job opportunities from all across the U.S. and Canada.

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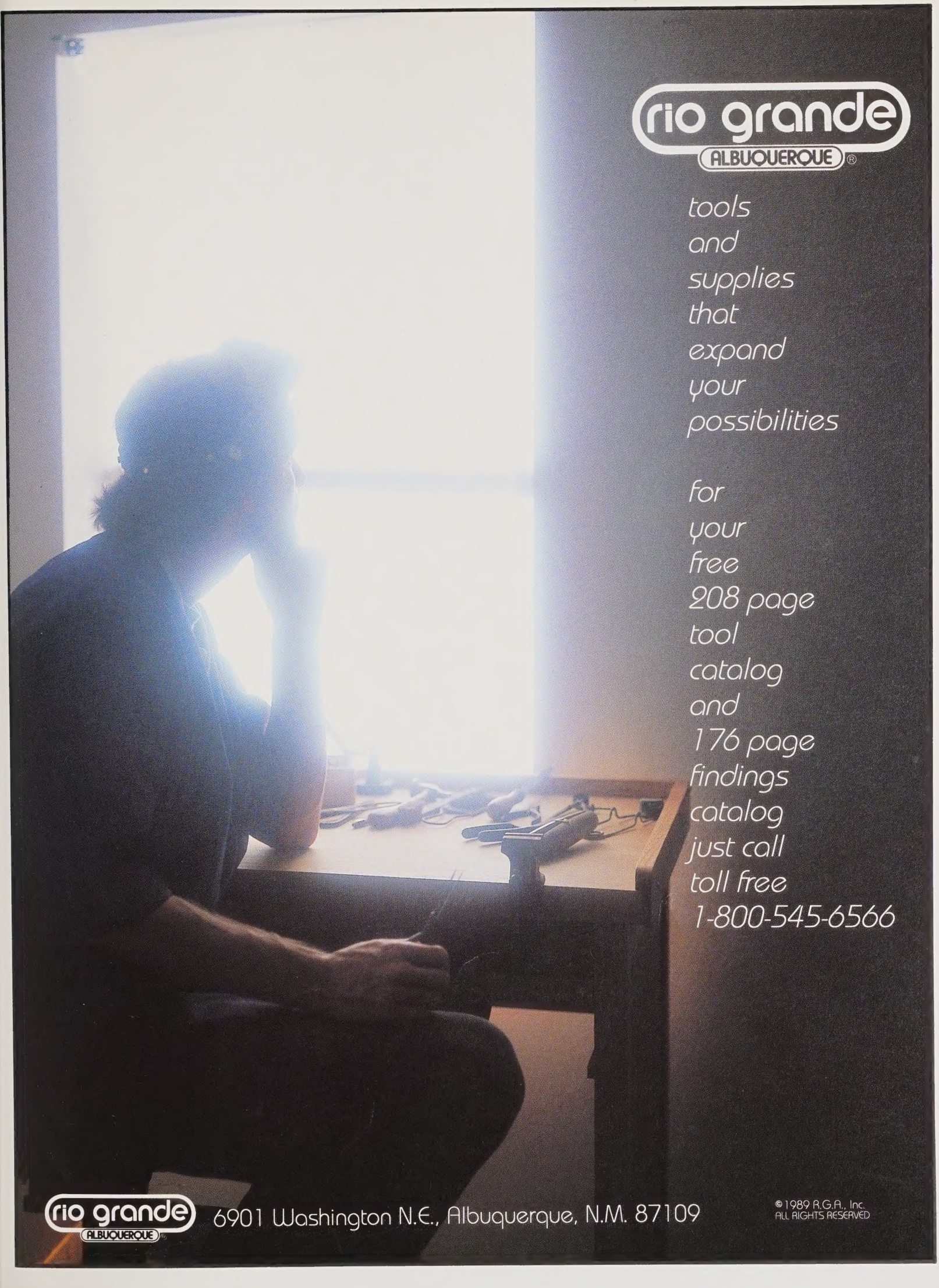
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